VOICES FROM THE PEN AND THE PAGE: QUICK

WRITES FOR NURSING STUDENTS

By

LYNNIE IRENE SKEEN

Bachelor of Science in Nursing
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma
1993

Master of Science in Nursing
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
2000

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GraduateCollege of the
OklahomaStateUniversity
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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Pamela Brown

_____
Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Kathryn Castle

_____

Dr. Gouping Zhao

_____

Dr. Stephen Perkins

_____
Outside Committee Member

Dr. Sheryl A. Tucker

_____
Dean of the GraduateCollege
.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Writing to learn helps students think about content and find the words to explain what they comprehend, reflect on how they understand the content, and consider what their own process of learning involves." (Knipper & Duggan, 2006, p. 469)

Background

Why do I teach? Why do I write? How do students learn? Can writing open veins of learning and invigorate numb minds? I have been thinking about why I teach in the face of generational differences, leaps of technology and the need for nurses who are unafraid to touch their patients and reflect on their learning and their practice. I teach because I want to leave something of myself behind. I teach because I believe in the principle of multiplication. Alone I can touch only the lives of the patients who cross my path, but as a teacher I can touch my students and all the patients they eventually encounter. I teach because there is more to nursing than curriculum, theory and skills. Nursing is both a science and an art. The science can be a challenge for many students, but the art of nursing, I think, is more "caught" than taught. The intuition needed

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innursing-compassion and caring, seeing the patient as more than diseased, as an individual with needs, desires and dreams, takes more than knowledge about the science of pathophysiology; it takes the art of nursing. I teach from an 'agogical' perspective (learning from and with someone who can really deepen my action-sensitive understanding) (van Manen, 1990, p. 153) that is compatible with teacher research.

Why do I write? I write to tell a story—my story, and my students' stories. I write to find my voice and emotion. I write so that who I am now does not get lost in the who I am becoming. I write to pass on the things that would be missed if left unwritten. I write because,in medicine,to not write means it did not happen. I write because there is power in words; there is healing in words; there is life in words. I write because of the Oklahoma State University Writing Project. In the summer of 2009 I spent five weeks in the Oklahoma State University Writing Project with several other teachers ranging from kindergarten to university professors looking at writing, research and professional growth. During the Writing Project we wrote, participated in writing groups and read our writing aloud to one other. We joined other Writing Projects sites across the nation via the internet whose participants read our writing and gave feedback. The Writing Projecttaught me the importance of writing and of my voice. I want my students to learn to write more than just the "clear, coherent, concise" (Young, 2005, p. 76) language of nurses' notes. Nursing school teaches a student that if it is not written it has not been done and that everything a nurse writes in the chart becomes a legal document and can be cited in lawsuits. I agree with Young (2005) that "…many students develop a fear and dislike of writing and realize that it is seen as a mechanistic activity for reporting information and not an integral part of their roles in a developing health care situation. When the art of communication is lost, so is

creative thinking…" (p. 77). The technical writing of "nurses' notes" is the positivist or objective side of nursing, and perhaps because of this necessary focus, we have lost the subjective components that intertwine the stories of (student) nurse and patient. I want my nursing students to write, to realize they are not blank slates. I want them to write so that in the writing they can see nursing in a new light. I want them to write so they can discover the narrative subjective part of nursing and to have a place to tell their stories in their own voices.

How do students learn? Some learn vicariously by watching the missteps of other students or hearing the stories of faculty and classmates. Some learn from the written word in book and article, power point and outline, the text or on line in discussions and chats. Some students learn with movement and touch, pen to paper, fingers to keyboard, wrestling with new concepts and new knowledge. Students want to get the right answer; I want them to get the "write" (right) question. I am tired of hearing my own words repeated unchanged and given back to me. Mimicry is not flattery; it is the inability to go beyond or to make it one's own. I sometimes feel as if I am drowning in the words I have said that come back at me verbatim.

Today's nursing students are faced with anabundance of challenges in their journey from college student to professional registered nurse withthe litany of skills they must acquire to prepare them to be effective nurses in the work place. They must learn how to communicate on a wide variety of stages. They will talk with physicians who have had more education than they on one end of the spectrum; on the other end, they need to communicate effectively with young children whose vocabularies and mental development is more limited

than their own. They must think on their feet, make decisions on limited data and do so with some assurance that their decisions can save a life.

Significance

"The college curriculum says to students, in effect, 'Come and get it, but you're on your own as to what to make of it all'" (Graff, 2003, p. 3). To think and reflect on life, learning and self is an art that seems to have been lost in our fast paced, every-moment-filled-schedules of today. "Writing is not superficial to the intellectual life but central to it; writing is one of the most disciplined ways of making meaning and one of the most effective methods we can use to monitor our own thinking" (Murray, 2004). It is in the act of writing that students are given the opportunity to make use of what they know and to manipulate this knowledge into further knowing (Murray, 2004). "Until there is that evolving text, the teacher's materials are abstract, unrelated to the student's knowledge or experience. When there is text, however, the instructor and the class can begin to discover what each writer knows and needs to know" (Murray, 2004, p. 83).In my classrooms I see students taking notes or giving back bits and pieces of information that often seem disconnected. I want them to discover and move from abstract ideas to connection and critical thinking.I believe that encouraging them to write more personally is one avenue to foster intellectual and relational connections.

In the past the writing that I have asked of students has been formal papers or descriptions of what they have observed. Assigned writing has not been for the purpose of helping me discover what the student knows and/or needs to learn. The type of writing I want to bring into the classroom in this study has a unique purpose. "Writers need time to watch themselves thinking, to observe and reobserve what they have learned, time to make

connections and disconnections, to experiment with relationships and patterns, to see orders, and to hear voices" (Murray, 2004, p. 85).Janet Emig (1997) states, "…writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain, which entails the active participation in the process of both the left and the right hemispheres…" (pp. 10-11). Learning content for retention is one aspect of learning; however, according to Nagin (2006), "All teachers can use writing to help students reflect and think critically about content" (p. 54). Gammill (2006) states, "Writing is a tool for thinking. All knowledge is best absorbed and applied when students make it their own" (p. 760).

It is my hope that through writing informally in the classroom, students will be able to reconnect their lifeworld and the knowledge they have already acquired to the learning intheir nursing courses. The utilization of reflection through writing on content may help students connect their prior knowledge to the content and may help students with their critical thinking skills.

It is one thing to engage in personal journaling, but from the Oklahoma State University Writing Project I began to see value in reading the writing aloud to an audience. Murray (2004) states,

> …we begin alone with our own observations and our own thoughts, but we need to present them to others, not just to share with others—to persuade, to entertain, to inform—but to find out what we mean. We learn through the interaction between writer and reader… (p. 189)

There is also an affective component to nursing and learning. Students are given opportunities in the nursing skills labs and the clinical setting to touch people physically in a

personal way with an examining eye. The discomfort that students experience in this process when they begin the program lends itself well to reflective writing.

I want to find a place where teacher and student can reflecton life and learning. I desire to hear each student's voice as distinct and individual, to see the learning of nursing unfold from one student to another from both life experience and nursing experience. Perhaps there is a broad spectrum of color, not only black words on white paper, but colors observed as the colorful language of life and inimitability. I would like my students to stop long enough to think, feel, and write about life, then to have them read those words out loud and hear the thoughts and concepts of themselves and their classmates. This is the transformation I want to experience in the classroom, on the clinical floor and in my office as students learn more than test taking, technology, teacher verbiage, simulation and skills. Through making connections between life and information, nursing students can step from the realm of the classroom into the "real world" of nursing. There they need to care for self, colleagues and client, who is no longer intangible and nebulous but authentic, vibrant, living –a real person.

Defining Terms

In my experience of education some pieces of education have been so much a part of my life that I take for granted everyone would have those same experiences, but each of us hashis/her own unique journey. To bring clarity to the reader, I will provide extended definitions to some concepts in this paper.

National Writing Project

I had the opportunity to participate in the Oklahoma State University National Writing Project in the summer of 2009. This experience with a wide variety of local teachers from schools education to the university, from novice teachers to those with many years of

experience, has had a direct impact on the direction of my dissertation. The National Writing

Project started at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1974 with twenty-nine teachers as

a professional development project.The teachers in the project partnered up with the

university to give credibility to the project. The original twenty-nine teachers desired to

"dignify the proposition that teacher knowledge was to be the starting point for learning"

(Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 7). There are some central principles that have made this

project become a national entity:

- A 'site' is a group of local teachers in partnership with a university or college.
- Teachers teach one another their 'best practices.'
- Teachers write and present their own work.
- Teachers read, discuss, and analyze research, reforms and other literature.
  (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 7)

Teacher Research

Teacher research is the methodology used in this study. Teacher research is

classroom practitioners involved in systematic and informed inquiry with the purpose of

enhancing teaching and learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The goal of teacher research

is to empower teachers to obtain deeper understanding and to improve instruction and

learning (Christianakis, 2008).   It is in the classroom that questions arise, and each class

brings with it nuances that enhance or alter the outcomes of the learning. Through teacher

research practical ways are found to engage teachers as "consumers of research, as

researchers of their own practice who use research to shape practice, as designers of their

own professional development, and as informants to scholars and policy makers regarding

critical issues in the field" (Rust, 2009, p. 1882). Teacher research can also "bridge the gap

between academic research and knowledge derived from practice" (Rust, 2009, p. 1886).

Teacher research allows teachers to take a pedagogical stance as they reflect on practice and

"increase their understanding of the relationship of teaching and learning resulting in action taken by them in light of what is educationally appropriate and good for students" (Castle, 2006, p. 1096). Teacher research allows the positionality of emic researcher. This epistemological stanceof emic researcher is the study design. "The careful investigation of even a single group of students can be a gold mine of insight: It may open up new images of what students are doing, why they do that, what the context offers or imposes, and how different teaching practices influence learning" (Flower, Wallace, Norris, & Burnett, 1994, p. 14).

Quick Writes

Quick writes are informal writings which use a variety of prompts to stimulate thinking and writing. The formality of grammar, structure and punctuation is not the concern of quick writes. When quick writing, each individual is encouraged to put down on paper as many thoughts or ideas as the prompt inspires, and format or style is not a concern (personal communication, Dr. Bates, June 1, 2009). The substance, not the structure, is valuable.Many things can be used as prompts: music, pictures, quotes, phrases, questions. The purpose of the prompt is to initiate the writing. The writing itself is time-limited, usually five to ten minutes, which gives the writer time to form and express ideas, emotions and understanding without the constraints of structure or formality. Another component of the quick write is the sharing of the writing withothers who have written to the prompt. Reading what has been put on paper is as important as putting it on paper in the first place.

Quick writes give students opportunities to express themselves and what they know as well as to grow as writers (Mason, Benedek-Wood, & Valasa, 2009; Reif, 2002). The quick write allows students to think on paper so that they can demonstrate prior knowledge,

summarize content, express opinions or make connections and meaning (Mason, Benedek-Wood, & Valasa, 2009; Wiggins & McTighe, 2008). This type of writing provides an opportunity for students to write without the stress of technique or grade and to express themselves and their knowledge in creative ways (Fisher & Frey, 2008). According to Reif (2002), quick writes help students use their imagination and become articulate and confident in their writing. Graves and Kittle (2005) state,

> Quick writes nudge us to discover topics that matter, not to respond to a question that may have nothing to do with our experience. When writing quickly, our own thoughts can surprise us. Quick writes seek diversity, not conformity. (p. 3)

Prompts

Prompts initiate quick writes. They can stimulate emotion, reveal knowledge or information, evoke strong opinions and begin controversial conversations. In the research reported in this study the prompt was different for each classroom experience and was based upon the content. When the content coveredsexuality the prompt was, "What does it mean to be male or female?" Each prompt was tied directly to the content either as a pre-content quick write or a post-content quick write, giving students an opportunity to connect their thinking, writing and learning in a creative way. An example of a post-content quick write was, "Pain that comes and goes...". Prior to the quick write the class had talked about the labor process. Randomly, I had the students put a clothes pin on their ear lobe and leave it there until told to remove it. The clothes pin was left for varying time periods from thirty seconds to one minute. Throughout the class the pin was placed and removed. The instructor also participated in the clothes pin pain experience. After the discussion the participants talked about their experience with pain. This exercise in pain was done to provide

participants with a common experience because prompts need to connect with the studentand/or with the content. The more thoughtful the prompt, the more thoughtful the response was from the student. Also, the more students participate in quick writes, the more comfortable they become with their writing.

Reflection

Time for reflection is a luxury in a world inundated with information and activity. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003), one definition of reflection is "… a thought, idea, or opinion formed or a remark made as a result of meditation...or consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose" (p. 1046). Reflection is a deliberate act, done in an orderly fashion with the purpose of understanding or change (Levett-Jones, 2007). For the purpose of this study the opportunity for reflection is provided in the classroom so the students can think and write relating to life experience, previous information and a guided prompt. "Reflective writingis about the practice of living, and writing makes it possible for the person to be engaged in a more reflective praxis" (van Manen 1990, p. 128).

Epistemology

Knowledge and what it means "to know" is one definition of epistemology (Crotty, 1998). The Collegiate Dictionary (2003) says that epistemology is "the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity" (p. 421). Students are not empty cups or blank slates. They have a plethora of life experiences and information gathered from many areas of their existence. Students stream new information through their personal framework. Because of a wide range of experience among students, the sharing of the quick writes epistemologically allows students to share

their knowledge and to hear other points of view, which enhances the students as well. When given the opportunity to reflect and write, will the students be able to make the connection with this epistemological stance?

Problem Statement

Nursing students have to make the transition from college student to professional school. They come from a methodology of memorization and regurgitation for learning and test taking (Dunne, 2003), but the nursing profession requires making connections with vital information and using that information with clients. Critical thinking and reflection are methods that students may not have used or recognized in their pursuit of a degree. Students seem to struggle to make connections between course material and their prior experiences and knowledge. They need opportunities and techniques to make meaning from didactic content. To be able to make the necessary transition from college to professional school, students need an avenue for learning and opportunities to document their learning in writing.

Purpose Statement

"Writing separates the knower from the known, but it also allows us to reclaim this knowledge and make it our own in a new and more intimate manner" (van Manen, 1990, p. 127). Writing helps the writer in a variety of ways. It can be used to clarify or objectify what is known, preserve thought or reflection, record change or growth and provide students with an avenue to question their own assumptions and consider opposing points of view (Nagin, 2006). "The very difficulty of writing is its virtue; it requires that students move beyond rote learning and simply reproducing information, facts, dates and formulas" (Nagin, 2006 p. 22). The use of quick writes is a creative method for students to connect new learning with previous knowledge as they filter it through their personal grid. Quick writes give students

the opportunity to look at their thoughts and their understanding of content objectively. Then, sharing writing by reading aloud offers students the opportunity to consider information from the perspectives of others.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to observe the use of quick writes in the nursing student classroom. By coupling the writing with reading aloud, the quick writes give this teacher- researcher an opportunity to observe and reflect on connections in the classroom of students with students, students with teacher and students with content. The use of an open-ended, semi-structured interview concerning the students' participation in the study adds to the understanding of the epistemological use of quick writes in the classroom.

Theoretical Perspective

Students should not expect to come as empty vessels to be filled in the classroom by the expert or the scholar on the stage. Such a concept perpetuates a power differential and denigrates the knowledge and learning that students bring with them. Understanding that learners bring their past life and learning with them helped me in choosing the framework for this study to be lifeworld theory. Lifeworld is much like culture. All of us have one, but not all of us are aware and alert as to what ours is.

Lifeworld theory is based in learning and reflection on life experiences, with the individual and his/her experiences added to the learning (Ekebergh, 2007). The fact that individuals bring into their learning earlier experiences and their individual understanding is the platform for lifeworld theory (Ekebergh, 2007). According to Ekebergh (2007) three attitudes make up the lifeworld platform: reflective attitude, natural attitude, and open mind attitude.

The reflective attitude lets students "become aware of their own values and view of existence and life"(Ekebergh, 2007, p. 334). This attitude gives students a second chance at learning from their experiences and theory. Students enhance their consciousness of life and their experiences through the act of reflection. The student of today, who is technologically savvy and who writes about anything and everything that is personal, may have a hard time valuing others and their differences. Reflection allows students to relate and connect on a deeper level to content as well as to other individuals.

"The natural attitude characterizes activity in which humans are completely directed towards, immersed in, and absorbed by the activity, or the being of the moment"(Ekebergh, 2007, p. 333). This includes the entire person, historical, cultural, and social as part of the lived experience. According to Ekebergh (2007), learning consists of the individual's experiences in correlation with conceptual learning. Within the natural attitude every new situation may have ontological, biographical and social aspects for learning (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). The natural attitude provides scaffolding for learning and a platform that is familiar to the present day student.

The open mind attitude characterizes the ability to look beyond what one already knows to the possibilities that may exist in the bigger picture. Open-mindedness means to look at concepts from different perspectives, to be willing to accept the incorrectness of previous thinking and to broaden one's perspective to include curiosity and a wider view of the whole. "This open approach in learning must be maintained by reflection, which is obvious in the learning context of caring" (Ekebergh, 2007, p. 336).

Van Manen (1990) looks at lifeworld as having four "existential" themes fundamental to lifeworld theory: "lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time

(temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality)" (p. 101). In lifeworld these existential themes also play a part in each student's experience.

For this research and the nursing students that I teach, lifeworld theory seems to fit well. These students at a Midwestern Historically Black College and University (HBCU) with a nursing school are a diverse population, bringing a variety of lifeworlds to their learning. This university also has a growing population of international students as well as international faculty, adding even further to the diversity and variety of lifeworlds. According to Ekebergh (2009),

> The learning process for nursing students is characterized by the encounter between the student's own lifeworld and scientific knowledge in theory and in practice. The aim is for the students to be able to gain sufficient knowledge so that they can understand the patient and the care context. (p. 51)

Schutz and Luckmann (1973) state, "The everyday lifeworld is to be understood that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense" (p.3). Schutz and Luckmann (1973) describe lifeworld to encompass one's individual cultures, experiences, and interactions and that others in one's lifeworld experience life similarly. The use of quick writes and the reading of those quick writes aloud may affirm that others in one's lifeworld experience life similarly or it may open up divergent perspectives that can add to the students' repertoire of learning and understanding.

Narrative Inquiry

This study will use the specific methodology of narrative inquiry within teacher research.Narrative inquiry seeks connections between teaching and learning and demands a

continuous engagement in reflection and deliberation (Kim & Latta, 2010). Narrative inquiry is complex, acknowledging multiple ways in which humans make meaning, and "narrative inquiry is part of the fabric that shapes and reshapes our social life" (Hendry, 2010, p. 79). According to Kramp (2004), "What distinguishes narrative as a mode of inquiry is that it is both a process, a narrator or participant telling or narrating, and a product, the story or narrative told" (p. 104).

   As the researcher using narrative inquiry, I give authority to the narrators—the students. Narrative inquiry opens up the opportunity to do an analysis of narrative as well as narrative analysis (Kramp, 2004). The analysis of the narrative lets the researcher look at the elements of the narrative or the common emergent themes. In narrative analysis the researcher examines "how the story is constructed, what linguistic tools are used, and the cultural context of the story" (Merriam, 2002, p. 287). Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to "attend to the commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality (past, present, future), sociality (the dialectic between inner and outer, the personal and social), and place (the concrete physicality of the place or places in which experiences are lived out and told)" (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010, p. 82). With the use of quick writes I look at the students' connection of lifeworld to content and also observe the students' narration for misunderstandings of content or connection.

   Dunne (2003) states that "...research into teaching is best served by narrative modes of inquiry: to understand a teacher's practice (on her own part or on the part of an observer) is to find an illuminating story (or stories) to tell of what she has been involved in with her students" (p. 367). Through narrative inquiry and the experience of writing, a richer understanding of my students' experiences with learning unfolds.

Research Questions

1. What do nursing students reflect through quick writes?

2. What happens when nursing students read their writing aloud?

The above questions give this researcher an opportunity to hear from the students, to listen for their voices, to glimpse into their life worlds, to share vicariously in their experiences. Reading their writing aloud is an opportunity for the writers to share their ideas, feelings and stories; hearing them talk about what it meant for them to read provides an opportunity to evaluate the students' perspective.

Summary

This study is observing the experience of quick writes in a nursing classroom, scrutinizing for content, themes, and lifeworld experiences. It is a teacher-research project and because it is, several ethical concerns were addressed. The literature states that writing helps students reflect and think about content, reveals their biases and feelings, and helps them to make it their own (Gammill, 2006; Murray, 2004; & Nagin, 2006). Simply stated this research wants to know what students will write, and what happens when the students share their writing by reading it aloud in the classroom.

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CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Meaning questions can never be closed down; they will always remain the subject

matter of the conversational relations of lived life…" (van Manen, 1990, p. 155).

Much of the literature concerning writing and the research in writing is from

elementary and secondary education. It is believed that it also applies to the college

curriculum; however, it is necessary to read the literature on writing across the

curriculum and consider the writing required of nursing students to support this

assumption. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), National Council

of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Writing Project (NWP) have developed

a framework that expounds on skills and habits of mind that are critical for student

success in college. The eight essential habits of mind are curiosity, openness,

engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility and metacognition

(Framework for success, 2011). They are defined as

Curiosity - the desire to know more about the world

Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking

in the world

Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning

Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating,

investigating, and representing ideas

Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and

long-term projects

Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one's actions and

understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others

Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands

Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as

on the individual and cultural processes and systems used to structure

knowledge (Framework for success, 2011, pp 4-5).

In order to write effectively as well as to communicate appropriately in their chosen career or profession, students must implement these eight habits of mind. University students need to be encouraged to allow higher education to challenge their thinking, engage their minds, expand their horizons and give them a safe place to express their ideas in a wide variety of writing. Students may not come with these mind habits, but teachers need to require them to practice them. To do so keeps learning and teaching active instead of inviting them to be passive.

Writing Pedagogy

According to Prain (2006), "Diversified writing tasks are viewed as an effective epistemological tool for learning in creating conditions for richer networks of meaning across different wording and contrasting communicative contexts" (p. 185). Writing has goals, whether technical or creative. Various goals of writing are to clarify thinking,tell a story, persuade an audience, express oneself or find a voice. Genre experimentation depends on the goal and the audience. Wilson (2009) reminds us that writing is to communicate from the writer to the reader as the reader "brings a powerful subjective perspective to the reading" (p. 59). In the process of writing, students construct knowledge, narrate their understanding and clarify for themselves as well as the reader

the crucial concepts that make"thoughts real"(Calkins, 1986; Gammill, 2006; Levett-Jones, 2007; Marcum-Dietrich, Byrne, & O'Hern, 2009; Murray, 2004). When students write, they are often surprised with the outcome. Students today do write, but little of their writing is on paper. Email was recently the mode of communication, but now students write in the genre of the social media, in text, Twitter, Facebook or the latest popular technology (Blankenship, 2011; Jacobs, 2008). A significant difference is evident in words in cyber space and those in hard copy. Gammill (2006) states,"Writing creates a permanent record of a student's thoughts and attitudes, a record one can return to as one learns and grows" (p. 756). It is the written word on the page, unlike words in cyber space,that helps each of us revisit the writing to be reminded of what we had thought or felt, and also to give the writer an opportunity to revise, expound, or clarify thoughts or add details that may have been left out in the first writing. It is the original writing that seems to be the challenge for student and teacher alike.

Writing needs to occur on a regular basis for it to become natural or second nature. Students rarely write every day outside of the social context. Teachers need to show students how to write formally and in a variety of formats and genre, displaying logical organization and mechanical expertise. Graves (1994) aptly states, "Showing students howto write takes time….and students need daily writing time" (p. 105). If students do not value or enjoy expressing themselves other than in the social context they will not take time to learn the writing process or to find their writing voice and natural genre. "Using class time shows students how important writing skills are to their thinking skills and to their understanding of content" (Allen, Bowers, &Diekelmann, 1989, p. 9). Practice, practice, practice is called for if students are to become comfortable writing.

They need informal writing opportunities as well as formal assignments.Both student and teacher need to expose their work to others; it is in the exposure and discussion that blind spots can be pointed out, imaginations stirred, new writing genres attempted, and voices heard.

This type of learning should not be limited or relegated to the English class or department. "Writing in creative genres, although unusual in science classrooms, can help students absorb scientific knowledge by allowing them to express scientific thought in their own voices" (Marcum-Dietrich, Byrne, & O'Hern, 2009, p. 15). The use of creative writing then becomes an opportunity for knowledge construction and not merely an assessment tool. "Engaging both the left and right side of the brain creates a bridge between literary and scientific activities and gives students confidence in their ability to grasp both scientific and literary concepts"(Marcum-Dietrich, Byrne, & O'Hern, 2009, p. 16). Enhancing the use of the whole brain and the whole person in learning and writing gives students (nursing students) a voice, it helps them construct knowledge, and it gives them confidence as "it nourishes retrieval and creativity, visualizes thoughts, and extends the writer's observations into new ideas" (Hays, 2005, p. 53).

No epistemological tool has the capacity to offer as much to a student as the task of writing. This concept was put succinctly by van Manen:"Writing teaches us what we know, and in what way we know what we know. However, not until we write it down do we quite know what we know" (p. 127). In higher education, knowledge is no longer a collection of random facts; instead it is an opportunity to make connections, critically think and analyze and synthesize one's learning into expanding knowledge. "No other exercise in the classroom generates higher thinking skills than does writing" (Gammill,

2006, p. 760). Why would teachers not want students to write? Writing gives insight to the person who writes, it gives pause to the person who reads, and often it gives enjoyment to those who read or hear it. Writing records knowledge and information, it gives voice to the writer and for educated persons it gives an opportunity to critique and give value or argument. Writing gives the writer an opportunity to organize thoughts and to manipulate language in ways that cause growth to both the writer and his readers. It is in the organization and manipulation that writers often refine the skill of word pictures that can inspire, educate and clarify.

Young (2005) states that "creative writing encourages creative thinking" (p. 78). In the complex world of nursing and nursing education, students need opportunities to practice, demonstrate and use creative and critical thinking in a variety of circumstances and situations. "Writing to learn is useful for much more than information retention and raising test scores; it helps students reflect and critically think about content" (Gammill, 2006, p. 764). Creative writing helps students tell their own stories, strengthen their use of language and hopefully give them a voice and an interactive part in their own learning. Through writing, students will demonstrate their ability to "exploit the full range of language, including metaphor and rhetoric, as tools to convey social, cultural and ethical meaning and to express emotion" (Young, 2005, p. 77).

Everyday metaphors can be used to define and represent theories. This "translating complex explanations into accessible language and concepts would seem to justify a pedagogical focus on the role of metaphor and analogy in learning..."(Prain, 2006, p. 188).Nursing students need to be able to put complex procedures and scientific language into words that can be understood. What is required is more than just learning

nursing or medical jargon; it is the capacity todissect the complex into its smaller components and then to synthesize it back into its whole. Writing plays an integral part in nursing students' acquisition of this professional activity. "Writing is a tool for thinking. All knowledge is best absorbed and applied when students make it their own" (Gammill, 2006, p.760). When students write they "see more, feel more, think more, understand more than when they are not writing" (Murray, 2004, p. 7). It is important to give students the opportunity to see more—more of what is around them, more of the possibilities and opportunities. Nursing students need to feel more—more empathy for their classmates, their clients, themselves. They need to have critical minds when they read and write and when they look at what others have written. Students increase their understanding by writing. Whether using metaphor or rhyme, narrative and prose, writing can be a means of finding voice and meaning in life's experience (school or real).It also gives value to what students bring to learning.

Nursing studentsneed to transform from traditional rote learning and adapt to critical thinking that allows them to apply their learning. Writing provides an opportunity to enhance learning and to begin to think out loud on paper where learning can be examined, heard and revamped at will. Students in professional education must be able to analyze, synthesize and apply their learning. Writing gives them an avenue to acquire those skills.

Hildebrand in Prain (2006) states that "diversified writing tasks, including more imaginative writing, assisted students' learning processes, had strong motivating effects, and improved learning outcomes"(Hildbrand, 2004). Writing allows students to express angst and other emotions. It allows students to expose their thoughts, beliefs, and

experiences; their writing becomes more than mere words on pages—it also becomes

lessons learned by head and heart, making connections, tearing down walls, living life

outside of the box and yet letting them and others see opportunities and shadows that they

were unaware of even in the writing.

Clarity comes with writing,but there is value in writing with an audience in mind.

Murray (2004) states that writing begins alone, with individual observation and thought,

"but we need to present them[our thoughts] to others, not just to share with others--to

persuade, to entertain, to inform—but to find out what we mean" (p.189). The student can

learn through the interaction between writer and reader, or the one who hears his/her

words read aloud. Murray (2004) states, "The act of writing is not complete without a

reader, and most writers need one or two or three readers, perhaps five…who they know

will appreciate what is being said and how it is being said" (p.86). It does not matter if

the student reads his own work out loud to others or if others read the writing. Something

happens in the sharing, and it is this "something" that is important for the teacher to

discover with students. In that interaction there is the sharing of points of view, culture,

lifeworlds; it is a place where all embrace their homogeneity and celebrate their

diversity.Because quick writes are just a short response to a prompt, taking the time

toreadthe quick writes aloud reveals the different ways studentsmay haveinterpreted the

prompt. Writing what comes to onereveals individual thinking; what is inside is what

comes out. Discovering those things about the students and teacher and revealing those

things together is an adventure, a place for growth and revelation.

Anne Lamott (1994) says that "writing is about learning to pay attention and to

communicate what is going on" (p. 97). I want my students to pay attention to their

23

surroundings, to people, to cues both spoken and unspoken when they are taking care of clients. I want them to "present clearly their viewpoint, their line of vision...to see people as they really are, and to do this, they have to know who they are in the most compassionate possible sense" (Lamott, 1994, p. 97-98). Lamott (1994) in her book, talks about writing small assignments. She suggests writing in detail what can be seen in a one-inch square picture frame. The challenge in teaching and learning is to break down complex issues into their basic components, the essential parts, and then to reassemble those essential parts back into the complex whole. Helping students to write things out in those smaller parts and then to encourage them to manipulate those parts back into the big picture is what Lamott means when she gives the one-inch frame analogy. All can write the short account of life, experience, observation and understanding if they frame it in a one-inch picture frame. Lamott (1994) writes, "There is ecstasy in paying attention" (p. 100). Paying attention to self, knowing where one comes from, what he/she brings to a situation can happen when looking at small pieces of one's writing. Staying in the moment, being all there, not scattered distracted or disjointed, gives student and teacher an opportunity to discover things they were not aware of before. Paying attention to what others read, what is said and left unsaid, what is important can be part of aha moments for those who hear what is read. Reading thoughts out loud allows others to see and hear the writer in empathetic ways,which helps students connect with one another and content of what is read.

Writing can get students emotionally involved and help them associate their learning to what they already know (Bauman & Patterson, 2002).The act of writing requires students to journey beyond rote learning and merely reproducing information

(Nagin, 2006) to a place of ownership and connection, to a place of lifeworld learning, where they can reveal themselves and feel safe in the revelation.

Quick Writes

I was first introduced to quick writes in some of my doctoral classes at Oklahoma State University. However, I never realized the depth and breadth that quick writes could embrace until I was a part of the National Writing Project invitational summer institute one summer. Every day for six weeks we wrotequick writes, sometimes more than one a day. We shared what we wrote and it transformed me; I realized I had a writing voice and that it was worth speaking and hearing. Writing allows one to outrun his internal censors and enables the words, his own words, to untangle his thinking (Reif, 2003)."When the models for quick writes are compelling and carefully chosen, students are able to focus closely and write clearly" (Reif, 2003 p. 8). To Reif, quick writes are not just done from a simple prompt or phrase but from any medium—a piece of literature, a poem, prose, a picture, a film scene, a strand of music or a combination.

Two things are important in quick writes. First, according to Allen, Bowers, and Diekelmann (1998), "Using class time shows students how important writing skills are to their thinking skills and their understanding of content" (p. 9). Secondly,the instructormust execute the quick writes with the students. According to Reif (2003), doing the quick writes along with students helps teachers find time to write, discovering"their" writing voices, and helpingthem understand the difficulty of the task they are asking the students to accomplish.

Those who have used quick writes feel they are beneficial to writing.Reif (2003) states that these benefits are

- Focusing students' attention and stimulating their thinking at the beginning of a class.

- Encouraging writing about important ideas, chosen to make students think and feel as they learn.

- Offering surprise when students discover that they didn't realize how much they knew, or what they were thinking until they began writing.

- Building confidence when students see the quality of their writing.

- Offering ongoing practice for writing in sensible, realistic, and meaningful ways on demand or in timed situations.

- Teaching students to become better readers as they hear, see, and craft language.

- Providing examples of fine, compelling writing from their peers, their teacher, and professional writers. (p.9)

Quick write prompts need to be language rich, strong in imagery or emotion, thought provoking and of compelling interest to those asked to write (Reif, 2003). Just the act of quick writing requires students to think. They must think about what they know as well as how they want to express it. Quick writes demonstrate for students that they do have something to articulate and that they can verbalize it in a way that engages others.

Although quick writes have been used in many classrooms, research on the use of quick writes is limited. One study was done on a third-grade classroom using quick writes as an assessment tool. The study analysis looked at content on a pre-quick write completed before a field trip, a post-quick write after the field trip and an objective test

covering the same content on a state standardized test (Green, Smith, & Brown, 2007). It was found that "significant gains were exhibited by the students in three of the five classes" between the pre-quick write and the post-quick write (Green, Smith, & Brown, 2007, p. 48). A second study used middle school students with disabilities. This study used the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) developed by Graham and Harris (Mason, Kubina, & Taft, 2009). It also used "POW + TREE (POW: pick my ideas, organize my notes, write and say more; TREE: topic sentence, reasons—three or more, examine, ending)" (Mason, Kubina, & Taft, 2009, p. 206) as strategies to help students write more effectively. The study compared the writings of students after instruction in the use of the POW + TREE strategy.It used a pre- and post-instruction strategy and the students were graded on the criteria of improvement. Both research articles were quantitatively based and were concerned with the use of quick writes as an assessment tool. The current research, however, focuses on using quick writes on a regular basisin the classroom and its impact on students.

Nurse Writing

As a part of nursing school curriculum nursing students are taught four writing genres. The first is the writing of care plans. Journaling is a second genre as students reflect on their clinical experience.Third, charts,which arelegal documents, are an account of client care and must be managed by the facility and left at the facility. The fourth genreis scholarly papers that are researched and written using American Psychological Association (APA) format to help students learn how to write for publication.

Nursing Care Plan

The nursing care plan is based on the nursing process, a six-step process used to teach nursing students to organize the method of care they intend to use for their patients. Once the students learn the process, they are expected to write a care plan for every patient using this process.This process of thinking and problem solving is implementedin the nursing profession nationwide. The inclusion of care plans has become so much a part of nursing that the American Nurses Association (ANA) has made the nursing process its standard of practice. This nursing process of six basic steps is circular in modality.
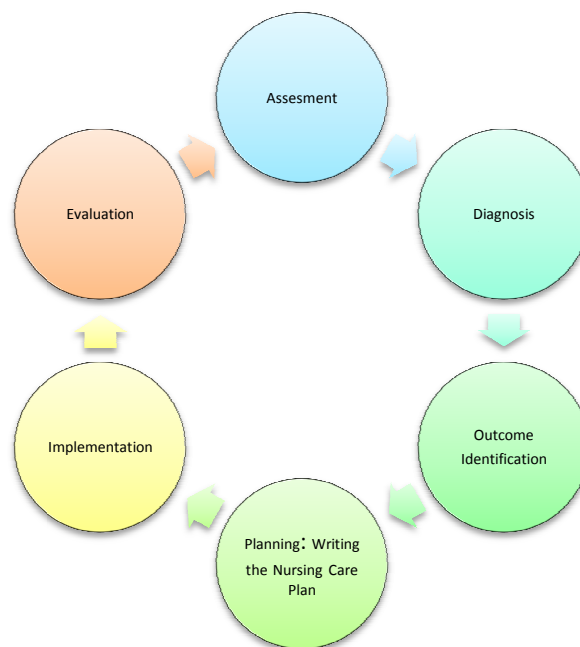
Figure 1. The Nursing Process

Figure 1.Visual depiction of the nursing process.Adapted from *Fundamentals of Nursing* by Craven and Hirnle (2009).

Assessment refers to the systematic gathering of subjective and objective data from the client.The client could be an individual, family or community. The purpose is to make a

nursing judgment from that data.The scaffolding the students implement to do their assessments is known as Gordon's (1994) functional health patterns. These patterns are listed below:

1. Health Perception - Health Management Pattern

2. Nutritional - Metabolic Pattern

3. Elimination Pattern

4. Activity - Exercise Pattern

5. Sleep - Rest Pattern

6. Cognitive - Perceptual Pattern

7. Self Perception - Self Concept Pattern

8. Role - Relationship Pattern

9. Sexuality - Reproductive Pattern

10. Coping - Stress Tolerance Pattern

11. Value - Belief Pattern.

This scaffolding is used to systematically collect information necessary to take care of the client. Using a form helpsnursing students keep track of the information in order to make informed, professional and accurate decisions concerning their clients.

Analyzing the assessment data, the students determine a specific problemand choosethe diagnosis. The diagnosis can be an actual problem that is validated by the assessment data, or it can be a potential problem but is not a problem at this time. "Nursing diagnoses refer to conditions or behaviours that are relevant to health management and can be helped or changed by nursing action" (Cholowski & Chan, 1992, p. 1171) and do not need a doctor's order to be carried out in the health care setting. Diagnosis has three

parts:the actual nomenclature from the North American Nursing Diagnosis Association (NANDA), the related to component, which is the etiology of the problem, and the assessment data that is used as evidence for the diagnosis. An example mightread, "Acute pain related to uterine contractions as evidenced by oxytocin induction of labor as evidenced by pitocin drip at 2 microunits a minute, contractions that are lasting one minute coming every 3 minutes and client expressing pain at a level of six out of a scale of ten when having contractions."

Outcome identification is a formulation of a realistic, measurable, client-focused goal that will be evaluated after care is given. Ideally this would be in collaboration with the client and his/her desired goals. Unfortunately, when writing the care plan the students often must come up with a goal without the client's input. The outcome must have three parts:it must be client-centered, measurable,and have a time frame. The first component of the outcome may be accomplished by the student's simply saying, "The client will. . . ."The component is measureable when, asin the above example of the pain diagnosis, it might state, "The client will express pain at a level of two or less on a ten point scale within one hour after receiving pain medication."

Planning is the process of writing out the specific plan for the possible solution to the problem. This part of the process is often the most challenging for students because they must come up with interventions that will help the client reach the outcome. This means the student must find interventions in their textbook or other resource books and give the scientific rationale for their chosen intervention. The students must become familiar with their textbooks in order for them to formulatethe interventions consistent with the diagnosis.

Implementation is the action component of the plan where the written plan is initiated.Students are encouraged to try the plan they have made to determine if it is beneficial to the client. Each outcome is to have three interventions so that the students have more than one option to help the client achieve the goal set by the plan.

Evaluation is the phase of the nursing processwhich determines if the outcomes identified are successfully met or if reassessment and modification are needed to resolve the original problem. Just as the diagnosis has three parts,so does the outcome and the evaluation. The goal was met in the example citedwhen the client reported a pain level of two within an hour after giving pain medication. The goal can be partially met if the client experiences some relief;however, the pain is rated at a three.The goal is not met if there was no pain relief using all of the planned interventions. If the goal is partial or not completely met, then the student begins the process of assessment and planning again to determine if the problem of pain can be resolved (Craven & Hirnle, 2009).

The writing of the care plan is done in a linear fashion the first year of the nursing program. The faculty wantsstudents to be able to think through the technique and write it in such a way that they can demonstrate the ability to think in terms of the nursing process and care for their clients in a scientifically based manner. Academically this is a difficult task, especially since there are several care plan books on the market that change the procedurefrom one of thinking to one of simply copying out of a book without the students thinking through the problem solving process.(My students are required to use their own textbooks as the basis of their care plans rather than copying from a care plan book, and I have to caution them that the standardized care plans are not acceptable.) It is one thing for a student to use a professionally written care plan as a template or a guide

and another for them to copy it and claim it as their own. The whole purpose of this type of writing in the nursing program is to help the student begin to think in clinical terms and to learn the problem solving process needed to care for clients in different settings.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a part of the clinical experience for the nursing students in theprogram. It is required in the clinical courses and allows the students an avenue of communication between themselves and their clinical faculty. "A journal combines the objective data of a log with the personal expressions of a diary and becomes a tool for personal growth and development" (Gillis, 2001, p. 49). Students are encouraged to be introspective concerning their clinical experience and to explore in dialogue personal and professional dilemmas in a safe mentoring situation. Because the journal is a dialogue, it necessitates feedback from the faculty that is appropriate and encouraging,allowing students to discover their own values, ethics and journey into health care (Gillis, 2001; Hume, 2009; Kennison, 2006; Ritchie, 2003).It is the interaction and collaboration between faculty and student—not just the summary of events but the reflection on events—that can make the journal student-centered and an effective teaching strategy (Kok & Chabeli, 2002).

Journaling is more effective when it has specificguidelines for the students.The instructions for the journal entries were in writing so students could have a clear rubric to follow and to understand that journal writing is more than just giving a blow-by-blow account of their clinical experience. The journal instructions given at this Midwestern School of Nursing to students in their syllabi are as follows:

Journal Entries:

Journal entries are a personal recording of the events of the clinical day rather than an objective narrative and include

1. Personal learning objective for the day (determined prior to clinical) and related to course objectives.

2. Personal reactions to the clinical experience (thoughts and feelings).

3. New insights gained

4. Questions and dilemmas

5. Interactions and experiences with clients, other health care professionals, or individuals that impacted experience

6. Include description of setting.

Questions to include in your reflection:

- *What did I do in this situation?*

- *What was the outcome?*

- *Was it the outcome I anticipated?*

- *If not, what was different?*

- *Why was it different? Was it something I did, something a patient did, something that happened in the environment around us?*

- *Was I happy with the way things turned out? Why?*

- *How could I do things differently another time when presented with a similar situation?*

- *What were some of the things I did well in this situation?*

- *What are some things I could improve?*

- *Are there things in this situation I cannot change? Why is that?*

   Evaluation:

   Journal entries facilitate dialogue between the student and the instructor. All entries remain confidential. Entries are evaluated based on evidence of critical thinking, personal learning and the ability to reflect upon the experience. The journal's grades will be reflected on the Bondy under Communication, Leadership and Professional Development.(Syllabus NR 3445 Nursing of the Childbearing Family, Spring 2012)

According to Gillis (2001), journal writing and reflecting over the students' personal experience has a purpose: to "develop higher-level conceptual skills by enhancing understanding" (p. 50). There is an intuitive component to nursing and the care given to clients. Journaling is a method that helps students tap into their intuitive side and is an act of "integrating theory, research, and praxis" (Gustafsson & Fagerberg, 2004, p. 272).Journaling in the nursing curriculum involves students in not just expressing some of their angst concerning caring for clients, but it is an exercise in reflection and an opportunity, if used properly, for personal and professional growth. The use of journaling in nursing school is well established, and this type of writing is done in every clinical course but is only helpful when faculty is able to establish trust and give appropriate and timely feedback to students. If the journal is not a dialogue, if both parties are not engaged, then it not only loses its effectiveness but wastes`the timeof both student and instructor. If the journal is fictitious or frivolous, the student loses the

opportunity for journaling to be a tool; instead, it just becomes another task to mark off the to-do list.

Charting

Charting the care of patients is an integral part of the nursing profession and is introduced to nursing students early in their nursing education.The purpose of charting from a legal aspect "is always to accurately and completely record the care given to patients, as well as their response to that care" (Monarch, 2007, p.58).Charting has several different formats, such asnarrative, PIE, DAR, SOAPIEand flow sheets.

Narrative isa type of charting in which nurses/nursing students date and time each entry. In each entry the nurse describes the assessment data, documents treatments and medications given to the client. The narrative notes also record any change in client status, lists any teaching doneand identifies the client's response to treatment.

PIE and DAR are other forms of charting that are similar. PIE (problem, intervention, evaluation)associates every entry with a problem, what the nurse did to alleviate the problem and evaluates the intervention to determine if it successfully solved the problem or if there needs to be a change in the intervention. DAR (data, action, response)is similar to PIE charting. The difference is that with DAR more assessment is incorporated into the charting, not just the listing of a problem.

Many facilities use the charting by exception method and the exception is recorded as subjective data, objective data, assessment data, plan, intervention and evaluation (SOAPIE) notes (*Charting made incredibly easy*, 2002). SOAPIE notes fall more into the format of the nursing care plan that nursing students learn in their education but is more time consuming when charting than some of the other methods listed. Many

facilities are employing computerized charting that uses flowsheets and minimal narrative charting. The temptation with flow sheets is that some caregivers find it easy to just check off the same data that others have done rather than doing a complete assessment. The checking of boxes is less discriminating than having to write in one's own words what he/she saw, felt, heard, smelled or experienced with the client. No matter which method is used, the basic tenet is that if it is not charted then it is not done. Nurses and nursing students are aware of the importance of charting and the legal aspects and ramifications of the documentation.

Several rules go with charting according to *Charting Made Incredibly Easy* (2000). This publication has broken down the rules as to the how, what, when, and who of charting:

- Stick to facts when you chart.

- Only chart what you see, hear, smell, feel, measure, and count.

- Avoid labeling; just describe behavior that you can observe.

- Be specific and clear with what you record in the chart.

- Use neutral language not recording anything that could sound judgmental or argumentative.

- Keep the record intact. Don't discard any part of the chart.

- There are three things that should always be in the charting: significant situations, complete assessment data and discharge instructions.

- Students are taught to chart nursing care when it is done or as soon after as possible.("Incredibly easy charting defensively", 2000)

In addition to the above rules,nursing students are taught never to chart before the care is given to maintain reliability and credibility to their charting. If they are poor cursive writers they are to print their notes but use a cursive signature. This particular type of writing is importantin the students' future profession and helps students learn to write correctly. This crucial task prepares them to document the care they have given, defend their performance of care and reason critically in the legal arena. The use of computerized charting will alter some of what is taught in the nursing curriculum, but there are still basic principles that the students must adhere to when charting the care they have given.

Academic Writing

Traditionally, academic writing is an assignment that the student does in isolation. Students are asked to gather data to support a premise and to organize the data in a systematic approach that demonstrates their ability to convey understanding and significance of their topic. These assignments may be high stake events, depending upon the weight the graded paper has in the curriculum. Students often procrastinate, disregarding their need for rewrites or feedback from instructors. They simply rely on a first draft to carry the grade.

Many students find academic writing challenging because they are asked to write when they do not feel as if they have a voice and are asked to write about topics unfamiliar to them. Caron (2008) states that students and writers in general write poorly when "we don't know what we are writing about" (p. 138). Many of the academic writing assignments given to students are on topics unfamiliar to them, and reading an article or two does not familiarize the student with the topic. Students must be able to communicate

logically in a written format that often is different from the format they learned in English composition courses. The challenge in academic writing is not that students have a problem with writing but that they need to "think and learn in a new realm" (Caron, 2008, p. 139).

In the first semester in the nursing program at this Midwestern nursing school, the students are asked to write a concept paper, a broad paper that requires them to define a topic and to research the professional literature.This task is accomplished in parts as students are taught how to do an annotated bibliography, an introduction, literature review, a body and then a conclusion. They are allowed to do this paper individually or as a group. The students are then required to write a reference list in American Psychological Association (APA) style. The challenge with group activity is that oftentimes one or two students may go through the process while others in the group are not learning the process of writing a scholarly academic paper. In the senior year they are asked to write a formal paper over health care disparities for minorities. They are asked to research a specific minority and to look at the statistics and the health care issues that face that ethnic group. They are given an opportunity to turn in a rough draft which can be critiqued prior to turning in the final paper for grading. In the last semester of their senior year the students are introduced to the research process and are given an opportunity to write a research proposal. They are expected to write a research proposal including everything needed to present the project to the Institutional Review Board for approval.

This process takes the students through a wide range of academic writing skills. Many students struggle with the academic type of writing because it has rigidly imposed

guidelines and formats (Whitehead, 2002). Each of those writing skills takes them through the process so that the students will be prepared for graduate education and for their chosen profession. Nursing programs have adopted the APA format for academic writing because many of the nursing journals require this format for publication. Unfortunately, because many students have learned the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, it takes time and instruction for them to make this transition (Lance & Lance, 2006). Academic writing assignments in the nursing curriculum are given to help students achieve competence in writing formal papers, executing relevant literature searches, reading and understanding research articles and writing effectively on a professional level (Luthy, Peterson, Lassetter, & Callister, 2009).

Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing across the curriculum is not a new concept in education. This concept has been around for almost thirty years. Its academic philosophy has been the idea that writing is not the sole responsibility of the English department. Instead,the whole academic community should be involved in promoting student writing throughout the undergraduate education.The very act of writing improves communication, enhances learning and prepares nursing students for their nursing career (Luthy, Peterson, Lassetter, & Callister, 2009).

Some feel that writing across the curriculum does not apply to certain academic pursuits such as engineering, math, lab sciences like chemistry, nursing or physical education. Yet, a study by Helman and Rowland (2008) states that they want a "writing curriculum framework that simultaneously includes serious engagement with the discipline and serious engagement with writing, grounded in a traditionally academic

approach to critical thinking" (2008, para. 4). This study found that students in a college physical education course were able to improve their writing and write on tasks important to the curriculum.

The formal writing required in academia can be daunting to students. Students say frequently that they would rather take a test any day than write a paper. Part of the students'concern may be that in academia theirwriting is a high stakes endeavor, is formal and isgraded.It is not that students do not write, because they do write extensively on Facebook, Twitter, and on their phone texting, but this writing is informal, ungraded and usually seen primarily by peers. These types of communication use abbreviations, informal language and often have no regard or concern for punctuation, capitalization, spelling or organization (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, & Hook, 2010). Students in this study were required to take three composition courses prior to being admitted to the program. Those composition courses—English Composition 1, English Composition 2, and Advanced Composition—prepare students to write using a more formal manner, but the English department teaches the students to usethe Modern Language Association (MLA) format. The students spend three semesters learning a format that is not helpful in the type of nursing writing required. Writing across the curriculum should help the students in a variety of formats, but ultimately it falls back on the students to familiarize themselves with the format required for each assignment.

Writing in content-driven courses like nursing gives the instructor an opportunity to evaluate the student's writing and to incorporate writing in the classroom (Lance & Lance, 2006). Writing across the curriculum is an opportunity for those in the nursing profession to nurture and mentor students into being better communicators through the

written word. Taking the foundation of the English department and the basic five-paragraph paper and expanding it into scholarly endeavors will help studentsnegotiate the gap from undergraduate student to graduate student and from novice practitioner to professional person.

Teacher Research

Teacher research is an endeavor to make teaching better, to make learning a cooperative journey between teacher and learner. Can teachers be students of teaching, students of learning and students of students? Can teachers stop talking long enough to listen? Teachers ask students to read a book, article or assignment, but do the teachers take time to read their students' papers,to hear their struggle over complex content minus concrete experience? Nursing students must learn to take the responsibility of being involved in the lives of clients. Teachers assume the responsibility of being involved in the lives of students. Both tasks involve risk and responsibility (Lytle, 2008). Solutions to learning must come from those in the trenches struggling to learn, from teachers who pay attention to the classroom, the setting and the students. The content is not the variable in teacher research; it often remains the same semester after semester or even year after year. The variable that does change is the student, with each class bringing its unique culture and dynamic personality. Do teachers view students as new scholars or remedial learners (Lytle, 2008)? If the teacher is a variable, it often is in the area of attitude toward the students. Teacher research must require that teachers pay attention to what they accomplish.They must be transparent in their teaching and not isolate themselves behind closed doors. Teachers must document day-to-day work to make things better for those they serve.

Effective teacher research does not blame bureaucracy, disparage students or bemoan the limited resources; instead teacher research requires "intention and attention to detail and invention" (Lytle, 2008, p. 378). Teachers must start with the assumption that they want to make a difference. The content of courses often remains concrete barriers to the learner, but it is the teachers'responsibility to engage each student, encourage each seeker of knowledge, and challenge themselves to adapt to their learners. Teacher researchers do not lower the bar of learning but look for opportunities to elevate students to the true scholars they can be. A teacher must be able to reflect on his/her practice, write about encounters with students, both the successful and the unsuccessful, be willing to listen to colleagues as well as students to discover what will work best for each class. There is no formula or cure that is universal in learning, but teacher research allows one to visualize each class and its unique needs and allow the students to be a part of the solution rather than assuming they are the problem.

Early in my doctoral training this question was posed:Does teaching happen if learning does not occur? I have railed against this question for several years. Many times I felt I had taught my heart out and had been flexible and inventive with my content delivery, yet students would complain that they had not learned a thing. I have struggled with understanding the symbiotic relationship that must exist between the students and the teacher. I know that as a teacher it is my desire to act in the best interest of my students (Castle, 2006), but to do so as a teacher researcher requires that I maintain a dialogue, or should I say trialogue, about what is the rightthing to do. I say trialogue because the conversation must flow to and from teacher and student, but it must also be disseminated outside the classroom to others. Others include administration, colleagues

and the greater audience of the stakeholders interested in improving learning. Both teachers and students need to continue to ask questions—questions of understanding, questions of the whys and why not's, the inquiry for more, for better, and for the best. Teacher research should be adaptive to the student to make their learning easier. Within this pedagogical stance there is the hope of empowerment for teachers and students alike as well as a deeper understanding and instructional improvement (Christianakis, 2008).

Is it possible to compose a curriculum that is relevant to learners? Can teachers open up spaces in the classroom for constructing knowledge, a place to demonstrate the depths and breadth of learning (Harste & Leland, 2007)? A balancing act goes on in the classroom between the banking system described by Freire (2002) and the understanding that students bring in experience and prior learning so that they have much to offer.Is it possible that both the teacher and the students can understand that the students are not empty vessels? Can students value the experience of learning over evaluation? Teacher research has the capacity of turning education back to a student-centered endeavor.

Constructivism

Constructivism is aneducational stance that allows students to create personal meaning from new content because the teacher meets the students at their current stage of knowledge. Two kinds of constructivism are used in the classroom—cognitive and social. Cognitive constructivism is done as an individual constructs ideas through a personal process. Social constructivism is done by constructing ideas through interaction with the teacher and other students. "The main concept [is] that ideas are constructed from experience to have a personal meaning for the student"(Powell, & Kalina, 2009 p. 241).

Students do not come to the classroom as empty vessels, but teachers need to construct their teaching around students' prior knowledge. To do so gives students an opportunity to showcase their learning and to give themselves a scaffold to hook new knowledge. "Teachers do not transfer knowledge to the students, but create opportunities for them to reconceptualize their experiences, thereby constructing their own knowledge" (Joldersma, 2011, p. 277). Kamii (1991) agrees that constructivism for children or students in general is the act of not internalizing the environment but rather that students come up with the answer from inside themselves and through trial and error. Constructivism no longer makes education teacher -centered but shifts the focus to be student-centered. The teacher's role becomes one that gives students opportunities to think, use their natural interests and process their mistakes not as wrong but as predictable solutions that need to be reconceptualized. Students reflect better on concepts through having conversations with students and teachers (Joldersma, 2011).

Duckworth (1991) states that "it is . . . exhilarating to find that your own ideas can lead you somewhere" (p. 2). Constructivism leaves the complexity in the situation and invites the students into the messy world of discovery. Teachers need to be willing to leave the complexity to the student and allow them to make their own connections within the idiosyncrasies of their own system of thought (Duckworth, 1991). The problem with this learning method is that it takes time, involves risks and has no easy answers. It engenders critical thinking for both the student and the teacher. Students are used to the world of high stakes testing rather than struggling with ideas and understanding, which makes constructivist type of teaching and learning an uncomfortable transition.

Summary

The literature concerning writing in nursing school is concerned with the professional needs of the student. Those writing styles are nurse care plans, journal writing, charting, and academic writing. Universities have employed writing across the curriculum to assist students in their ability to write in a scholarly manner. This chapter has looked at writing as pedagogy and introduced the concept that quick writes when introduced to the classroom with rich engaging prompts can add another dimension to students writing. As a part of quick writes it gives the students and the teacher a window into how and in what ways students are constructing their understanding of content. This chapter has also taken a brief look at teacher research and the pedagogical stance of constructivism in the classroom in the hopes of seeing the classroom not in isolation but as a joint effort between teachers and students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

"Writing creates a space that belongs to the unsayable. It is in this writerly space where there reigns the ultimate incomprehensibility of things, the unfathomable infiniteness of their being..." (van Manen, 2006, p. 718).

Deciding on the methodology of the research is an important decision made early in the process of designing a study. The decision to use teacher research as the methodology in this study was a natural for one coming from educational preparation presented at the doctoral level. Nursing practice is changing its professional stance by espousing evidence-based practice. Educators have learned the value of teachers trying to impact their own practice.

Teacher Research

Teacher research is the methodology used for this study. Teacher research is classroom practitioners involved in systematic and informed inquiry with the purpose of enhancing teaching and learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The goal of teacher research is to empower teachers, to give deeper understanding and to improve instruction and learning (Christianakis, 2008). In the classroom questions arise, and each class

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brings with it nuances that enhance or alter the outcomes of the learning. Teacher research is a practical way to engage teachers as "consumers of research, as researchers of their own practice who use research to shape practice, as designers of their own professional development, and as informants to scholars and policy makers regarding critical issues in the field" (Rust, 2009, p. 1882). Teacher research can also "bridge the gap between academic research and knowledge derived from practice"(Rust, 2009, p. 1886).

Benefits of teacher research include but are not limited to the following:

- increase in content and pedagogical knowledge;

- help for teachers to better connect theory and practice;

- promotion of deep and critical thinking;

- deepening of teachers' reflection and teacher knowledge of teaching;

- improvement in teacher community as teachers work together to solve classroom issues;

- giving students a voice, and benefit to pedagogy. (Arthar, Holly & Kasten, 2001; Baumann & Duffy, 2001; Castle, 2006; Hahs-Vaughn & Yanowitz, 2009; Harste & Leland, 2007; MacLean & Mohr, 1999; Perl & Schwartz, 2006)

The U.S. Department of Education and national attention in general call for experimental and quasi-experimental studies as the best way to determine how schools and classroom curriculum should be organized (DiPardo, et al., 2006). Teacher research looks at individual classrooms and specific students. Teacher research results are not

meant to be generalized. The process of teacher research means that teachers "learned from and with their students, and used inquiry to inform their teaching and learning" (Baumann & Duffy, 2001, pp. 608-609). Castle goes a little further with teacher research when she states that it "results in action taken by them [teachers] in light of what is educationally appropriate and good for students" (Castle, 2006, p. 1096).

Teacher research begins with an inquiry stance. According to Cochran-Smith (2003), "When inquiry is regarded as stance rather than as project or strategy, all the members of a community are regarded as learners and inquirers, and the model of an experttransmitting information to others with lesser or lower status knowledge or position is conspicuously absent" (p. 11).

Study Design

This research study is an interpretivist teacher research project which looks at the use of quick writes done by nursing students in the college classroom. The use of writing, specifically quick writes, is investigated to see how the writing opportunities encourage nursing students to connect their current knowledge to their experiences in nursing school and help them build upon that knowledge. The interpretivist stance is concerned with understanding rather than explaining (Crotty, 1998). Three components make up the interpretivist stance: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Symbolic interactionism, which explores the place culture plays in lives,is not a part of this study. In this study phenomenology challenges one to experience writing objectively and to question what has been taken for granted. Hermeneutics traditionally has been the interpretation of biblical text; however, it has been used in other contexts.This study will attempt to understand the text to uncover "meaning and

intentions" (Crotty, 1998, p. 91). This research design is "grounded in people's self-understanding" (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2010 p.69). The investigation of the social world is not based on detached objective truth but "is based on a lifeworld ontology which argues that all observation is theory-andvalue-laden" (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2010 p. 69).

Procedure

Every week for eight weeks there was a writing assignment. The writing assignment was a quick write completed in class from a prompt over the material covered in the class that day. Prompts were short phrases that the teacher-researcher chose to direct the participants' attention to content covered on that subject. The students were given several minutes to write from the prompt; the instructor also did a quick write using the same prompt. After writing, the students were given an opportunity to share what they had written with the whole class. Then the teacher-researcher read aloud her writing to the students. According to Andrews, et. al. (2001), when teachers do the assignment with the student, several things happen: the teacher is no longer the center of the classroom; teacher and students learn together; it is a type of staying with the student that can help build community. Graves (1994) states that sharing the writing assignment with the students demonstrates the teacher's value of learning, gives meaning to writing and affects learning; "When you write with your students, you show them what writing is for" (Graves, 1994, p. 113).

Quick Write Prompts

For purposes of this study, students were given writing prompts during the class period in which they were to write for five to ten minutes. All of the students in the

classroom did quick writes, but only the study participants' writing was analyzed for content, theme structure and connection with classroom content. Each prompt was connected to the content or principles that the students were studying during that week of class. The prompts were

- "What does it mean to be male or female?"

- "What I know about pregnancy"

- "Sex Ed Who/When/Where"

- "Pain that comes and goes"

- "What I expect from nursing school"

- "Did you meet my expectations?"

- "What I know about babies"

- "What does it mean to be a parent?".

Students were given the opportunity to write before or after content were presented. The literature states that it is important that students write on a regular basis for the maximized potential to be gained from the tasks of writing (Gammill, 2006; Lamott, 1994; Lieberman & Wood, 2003; Murray, 2004; Nagin, 2006).

Interview Component

Near the end of the semester students who volunteered for the study were interviewed. The interview was scheduled for forty-five minutes. The interview was semi-structured, using two questions which were asked of all the participants. The rest of the interview was conversational and student-driven concerning the issues brought up during the interview. The two questions structured for the interviews were (1) Describe your experience with writing this semester; (2) Tell me what you have noticed about

reading the writings aloud in class. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for content, themes and evidence of learning. The participants were given an opportunity to do member checks and review their interviews for accuracy and clarification. Using member checks, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the process of informal testing of information by soliciting reactions from the participants to the investigator's reconstruction of the data from what she has been told or otherwise found out. Doing the above member checks brought additional credibility to the research. Corrections and clarification were included in the data.

Interview Questions

The study participants also contributed to the study by participating in a semi-structured interview near the end of the semester. The following questions were asked of all the interviewed participants:

1. Describe your experience with writing this semester.

    What did you like?

    What did you dislike?

    What would you like to be added?

    What would you like to be different?

2. Tell me what you have noticed about reading the writings aloud in class.

    Can you give examples of what you have observed?

3. How have the quick writes affected your thinking about your future work as a nurse?

4. What quick writes do you remember best? This could refer to

    Your own writing

Another student's writing

A particular prompt

A memory of a response that was read aloud in class.

Depending upon the participants' responses, other spontaneous questions were asked.

Setting

This study was conducted at an HBCU established in 1890 and located in the Midwest. The university is located on 100,000 acres in a rural area. In 1978 the university was given an urban mission and now has a total of three campuses, the original campus located on a rural site, one campus located in the state capital, and the third in another large urban city in the state. According to the Vision Statement of the university,

The University a land grant historically Black institution of higher learning, will continue its rich tradition of developing leaders from a diverse,multicultural student body through excellent teaching, research, community service and public and private sector partnerships. As the University moves from Excellence to Greatness, it will be recognized for providing solutions to problems facing underserved populations in the state, the nation and the world.(University Catalog, 2010, p.16)

The objectives of this university are academic excellence, "student development, teamwork and trust, faculty enhancement, financial strength, state-of-the-art technology, physical infrastructure and effective public relations" (University Catalog, 2008 p. 16).

The study included eleven students in the Nursing of the Childbearing Family course. All eleven consented to have their quick writes incorporated into the data. Ten

of the students consented to an interview at the end of the semester. Eight quick writes were completed during the accelerated semester. The semester for the Nursing of the Childbearing Family lasted eight weeks, and participants wrote weekly. The interviews were conducted after the class was concluded while the students were attending the psycho-social nursing course. The interviews took place approximately four weeks after the end of the childbearing course. Six participants were purposively chosen for the interviews as a representative sample of the group.

Prompts were presented and quick writes completed in the classroom or laboratory by all students. The classroom where tests were takenhas tables set in rows with a middle aisle separating the right side of the classroom from the left. Each row consists of four students on each side of the aisle. Some classrooms have four rows on one side of the aisle and five rows on the opposite side of the aisle,seating a total of thirty-six students. Other classrooms have four students on each side of the aisle with one side having six rows and the opposite side having five rows,seatingforty-four students. Each classroom is set up with technology that includes computer access, internet, document camera, projector, Digital Video Disc (DVD), Video Cassette Recorder (VCR), dry erase board, tables rather than desks and large cushioned chairs.

Figure 2.Nursing Classroom

*Figure 2.*Nursing classroom at Midwestern HBCU

All writing was done in the nursing laboratory that containsfive round tables surrounded by large cushioned chairs. Five beds are in the laboratory with privacy curtains surrounding them; there are two private patient rooms. A nursing station in the nursing laboratory is situated to the left as one enters the room, and it separates the student traffic from the medication room and the dirty utility room. The dirty utility room houses the laundry hampers and used equipment that needs to be cleaned prior to reuse. On the walls in the nursing laboratory are mounted glove racks with varying sizes of glove boxes in them. Also mounted near each bed are a tympanic thermometer and a sharps box that the students use to dispose of used syringes. A bedside table separates each two beds,while over-bed tables sit at the foot of each bed along with rolling stools at each bedside. Four sinks are located in the nursing laboratory: one in the dirty utility room, one in the medication room, one next to the nurses' station and one free-standing

sink on the wall between the two private rooms located in the lab. A computer room in

the nursing laboratory houses seven computers situated on desks. Each computer has a

rolling chair by the desk.

Figure 3. Nursing Laboratory

Figure 3.Nursing Laboratory. Nursing laboratory where quick writes were

written. This view looks from the bed area into the nurses' station. Behind one door is the

traditional dirty utility room that allows for storage, laundry hampers, and cleaning of

equipment. Behind the other door is a traditional medication room where needles,

syringes and some medications can be locked up. The nurses' station has a computer,

printer and a desk, simulating a clinic or hospital setting.

Figure 4. Nursing Laboratory Bed View

*Figure 4.*Nursing Laboratory Bed View.The room holds five functioning

beds.Each bed is separated from the next by a privacy curtain. Within the curtained area

is a sharps box, night table near the bed, a gloves rack holding three different sizes of

gloves. Directly above the head of the bed is a tympanic thermometer, and sitting on top

of the bed are the electrical remotes to manipulate the bed in height and to raise the head

and legs of the bed.

All students did the quick writes as part of the class and teaching strategy, and

every student received participation points for doing the quick writes. All students gave

written consent to use their quick writes as data and only one student refused to do an

interview.

The interviews took place in a conference room on the first floor of the nursing

building. The purpose for using the conference room was to establish a neutral

environment. The room contains a large table with several large chairs around the table,

a white board, and two computers. The interview was audio-recorded for transcription

and accuracy. The participant was informed of the audio taping of the interview.

Participants were given copies of their quick writes and interview transcripts to review.

The participant was given an opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview for

accuracy and content.

Figure 5: Interview Room

*Figure 5.*First floor conference room that was used for study interviews. This room

consisted of a white board that is not seen and two computer stations that are also not in

view. All of the interviews were conducted in this room because it was neutral ground.

Course Content

In the course Nursing of the Childbearing Family the content builds upon what

the students learned in the first semester. The course objectives for this clinical course

are that students will

1. Discuss the dynamic structure and development of the family in contemporary

   society as it relates to the childbearing family.

2. Discuss the roles of the nurse in promoting, maintaining, and restoring the health of families during the childbearing cycle.

3. Apply the nursing process to promote, maintain, and restore the health of childbearing families.

4. Describe the impact of culture on the nursing process as it relates to the childbearing family.

5. Explore multidisciplinary community resources available to the childbearing family.

6. Describe the professional nurse role in relation to legal and ethical issues that impact the childbearing family.

7. Develop intervention strategies based on research findings that meet the unique developmental needs of the childbearing family.

8. Develop plans of care to affect change in the health status of childbearing families.

During this semester of the nursing program faculty build upon the knowledge the students gained the first semester. Students are required to employ assessment skills and techniques they learned in the prior semester and to add specialized assessment specific to the childbearing family. Part of this specialized assessment deals with labor, postpartum (after birth) and newborn.There is an additional assessment for each area. In caring for the laboring mother, the students' additional assessment is assessing the contractions. Three assessments are needed. First is the frequency of the uterine contractions. How often are the contractions coming? Second is the duration of the uterine contractions.How long are the contractions lasting? Third is intensity of the

contractions. How hard are the contractions? Students are taught how to calculate

Montevideo units to determine if contractions are of adequate strength to cause the labor

to progress. An added assessment is made of the client students cannot see—the fetus.

The electronic fetal monitor lets the health care provider monitor the fetus via the heart

rate. Students are required to assess for fetal heart rate accelerations,the increase in the

fetal heart rate (FHR) above the base line. The students must assess for three types of

decelerations from the fetal monitor strip. The first is an early deceleration. "The

waveform mirrors the contractions, it is usually within the normal range of 120-160 beats

per minute (bpm), indicate head compression" (Davidson, London, & Ladewig, 2008 p.

632). The second type is late decelerations."The waveform is uniform and ends after the

end of the contraction, it is usually within normal range of 120-130 beats per minute

(bpm), indicates uteroplacental insufficiency" (Davidson, London, & Ladewig, 2008 p.

632) and requires nursing interventions to resolve or delivery of the infant as soon as

possible. The third is variable decelerations. "The waveform shows sharp drops and

returns in heart rate usually in the shape of a V or W not usually in the normal range,

indicates umbilical cord compression" (Davidson, London, & Ladewig, 2008 p. 632) and

requires nursing interventions to resolve the decelerations, or, if unresolved, the delivery

of the infant as soon as possible.

For the postpartum mother,assessment is best described using the acronym

BUBBLEHE.

B- Breast assessment is the state of the breast, breast milk, and soft, filling or

engorged breast. Students also assess the nipples of the breast to determine if they are

everted or inverted, intact or cracked, blistered or bleeding.

U-Uterus assessment is to be palpated to determine location in proximity to the umbilicus and consistency, whether the uterus is firm or boggy. Also students assess if the uterus is displaced to the right due to bladder distention and must know the intervention needed to remedy the situation. They reassess the uterus after the intervention for the location of the uterus.

B-Bowel assessment assesses the bowels; they are auscultated for bowel sounds and the client assessed for the last time of bowel movement. Many postpartum mothers do not return to usual bowel habits forfivetoseven days post-delivery. Students determine from bowel assessment what interventions need to happen to help return the client to personal normal bowel function.

B-Bladder assessment assesses if the client is able to empty her bladder on a regular basis post-delivery. Many clients no longer feel the urgency to urinate once the fetus is no longer on top of the bladder, which often causes new mothers to delay urination long past the physiologic need. If the uterus is displaced to the right, this assessment requires an intervention to return the uterus to proper positioning so that the new mother can demonstrate after the trauma of birth to the urethra that she has the ability to empty her bladder through the resulting swelling.

L-Lochia assessment determines the type and amount of bleeding post-delivery. There are three types of lochia the students need to assess. The first is rubra and is "named for the Latin word for red" (Davidson, London, Ladewig, 2008, p. 1042). It lasts for the first twotothree days after delivery, should be moderate amount in flow and may contain a few small clots (Davidson, London, &Ladewig, 2008). The second stage is serosa. It is "pinkish in color and last from three to ten days" (Davidson, London,

&Ladewig, 2008 p. 1042). The last stage is alba, "the Latin word for white" (Davidson, London, & Ladewig, 2008, p. 1042). The importance of this assessment determines if the client is hemorrhaging or is having subinvolution.

E- Episiotomy or Incision assessment is located either on the abdomen if the mother had a caesarean section or at the vaginal introitus if she had a vaginal delivery. These surgical incisions need to be assessed for redness, edema, echymosis, drainage and approximation.

H-Homan's sign is an assessment that has been modified due to research and determines if the new mother has a deep vein thrombus in her lower extremities.

E-Emotions assessment determines if the new mother is having infant attachment issues or issues with postpartum blues or depression that can lead to postpartum psychosis.

Several additional assessments are added to the newborn above the usual assessments. The first additional assessment is the Apgar score designed by Dr. Virginia Apgar, an anesthesiologist, in 1952 (Davidson, London, & Ladewig, 2008). This assessment determines the need for the infant to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It is done when the infant is one minute of age, again at five minutes of age, and, if need be, a third time at ten minutes of age.

The second additional assessment done on the newborn is the Ballard gestational age to determine by physical examination of the infant what the gestational age of the infant is rather than looking at the estimated date of delivery as the determination for the infant's gestational age. Six neuromuscular assessments of maturity and seven areas are assessed for physical maturity.

The childbearing course has many ethical and personal issues that students often struggle over during their time in the class. Students look at sexual practices, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy and the technical and social contexts involved.Students often have affective issues with this course. The use of quick writes provides an opportunity for the students to grapple with some of the affective content from the childbearing course.

Each of the students wrote his/her quick write on notebook paper and turned it in for a participation grade. All of the students gave consent for their writing to be data for the purpose of this research project. Students who volunteered as participants in the research study had their writing copied and kept as part of the data collection.

Population

The population was drawn from the nursing school students enrolled at a Midwestern rural historically black college and university (HBCU).

Table 1: Students by Ethnicity
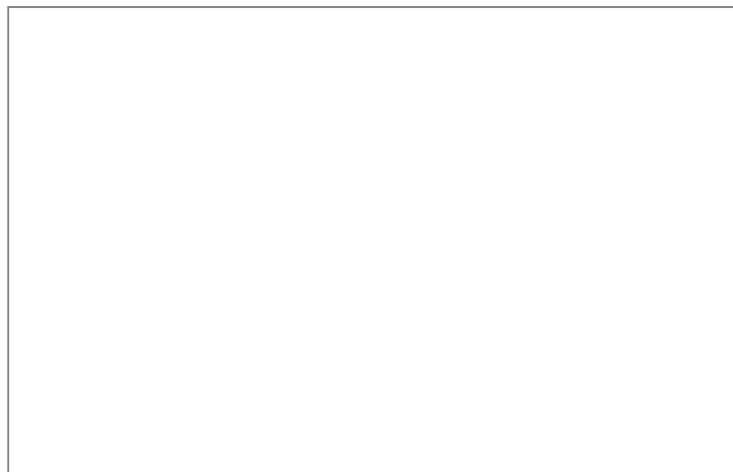
Table 1 Students by Ethnicity: The demographic makeup of the students in this program according to the demographic survey the students completed. They self-identified as 1

(9.1%) African, 1 (9.1%) Asian, 1 (9.1%) biracial, 5 (45.5%) black, 1 (9.1%) Hispanic, 1
(9.1%) other and 1 (9.1%) white.

Table 2: Students by Age
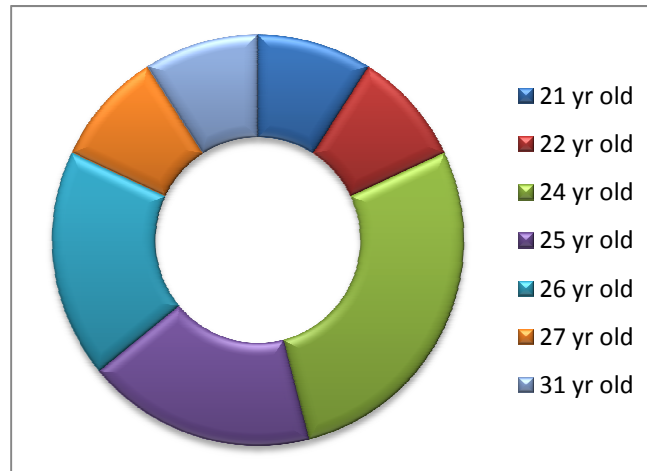
Table 2 Students by Age: The average age of the students enrolled this semester
was 25, withthe youngest being 21 and the oldest being 31 years old.

Table 3: Students by Gender
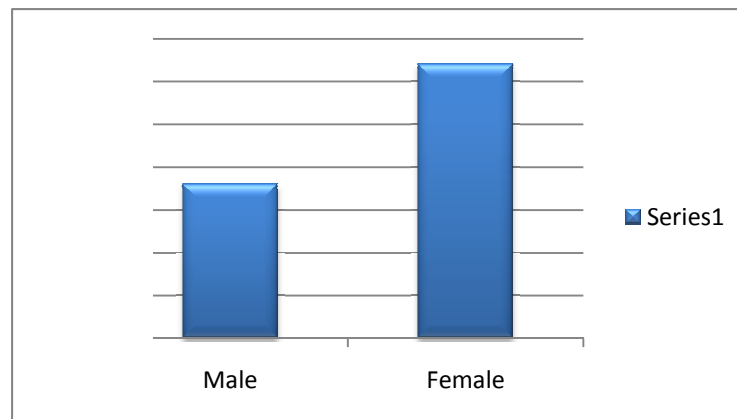
Table 3 Students by Gender: For the junior class of spring 2011 the demographic
makeup was a total of 11 students, 4(36.4 %) males and 7 females (63.6%).

Table 4: College Attendance
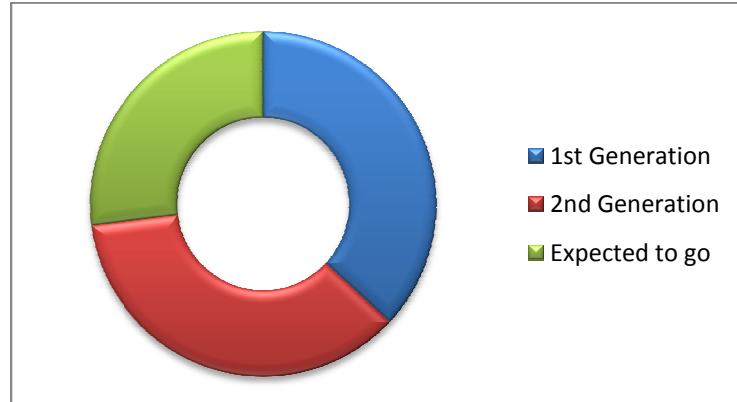
Table 4 College Attendance: The students were asked their educational status according to whether they were first generation college students, second generation college students or if everyone in the family was expected to attend college. According to the survey, 4 (36.4%) were first generation college students, 4 (36.4%) were second generation college students, and 3(27.3%) were expected to attend college.

The junior students were recruited from the Nursing of the Childbearing Family course. Purposive sampling was used for this study. The participantswere given an explanation of the study by a third party, not the teacher for the course,in order to address the potential for the perception of coercion of the students. After a thorough explanation of the study, students were given an opportunity to volunteer. At that time all eleven participants gave consent for their writing to be part of the data to be collected and ten of the participants volunteered to be interviewed. Since the whole class volunteered for the study, participants for the interviews were selected through purposive sampling to reflect the demographic makeup of the particular class.

Ethical Considerations

There are, according to van Manen (1990), some shared assumptions in action research:

1. The democracy assumption

2. The external knowledge assumption.

3. The reflection/action assumption

4. The change assumption

5. The teacher-as-researcher assumption.

To van Manen (1990) the democratic assumption for teacher research is the thought that a democratic stance would be different from the authoritarian, oppressor or controlling relationship usually associated with the teacher. This implies then that the opposite of authority would not be democracy but instead would be pedagogy. To avoid the above assumption ethically in teacher research,one must move from the democracy stance to one of "agogical – learning from and with someone who can really deepen . . . action-sensitive understanding" (van Manen, 1990, p. 153). In this stance the teacher-researcher must have respect for the adult learner and a desire for collaborative learning between student and teacher.

The external knowledge assumption for teacher research is the belief that someone outside the classroom would develop a theory and that the teacher would then superimpose that theory into the classroom. In teacher research, however, the practitioner is looking at best praxis in the individual class setting. Instead of the theory driving practice, it is the thoughtful reflection of the teacher researcher that can add to or develop theory rather than the other way around (van Manen, 1990).

The Reflection/Action Assumption is van Manen's (1990) answer to the separation of theory and practice and that they can come from two different areas of education, i.e., theory could come from the university educator and that practice comes from teachers who are primary and secondary educators;however, van Manen wants to bring in what he calls "pedagogical thoughtfulness and pedagogical tact" (p. 154). This means that the practitioner in the classroom is a better choice for finding solutions to pedagogical needs than someone not in the classroom.

The Change Assumption hinges on the idea of change, the always planning ahead to take action. But for van Manen (1990) teacher research is looking back or reflecting on teaching and what worked or what did not work. It is the act of teacher researchers learning as much from their students as their students learned from them.

The Teacher-as-Researcher Assumption is that each classroom has a problem and the researcher is going to solve that problem;however, van Manen (1990) wants teacher researchers not merely to solve problems but to constantly reflect over "meaning questions." Meaning questions are those questions that help provide a deeper understanding of the pedagogical stance. It is when teachers understand the meaning of learning, reading or math from the students' point of view that the purpose of teacher research can be acted upon in a pedagogical way.

Ethically, then, teacher research must be agogical, reflective, tactful and engaged. The research done in the classroom cannot be authoritarian and oppressive but instead malleable, based on learning with, from and about the class of studentswith whom the teacher researcher is engaging.

The above matters are concerned with the ethical concerns of the teacher doing the research in a classroom of students that some assume are a captive audience and because of the differential in power can make the research coercive. If the teacher deals with these assumptions before engaging in the research, it will minimize, if not eliminate, the coercive component. Another safeguard for the students is the ethical constraints that the research component places on the study. The following safeguards were done to also minimize the coercive component.

The junior participantssubmitted their writing on a weekly basis to the researcher, and the writing of those participating in this study was included in data collection and analysis. Confidentiality was ensured and pseudonyms were used when referring to student work. Participants were given an explanation of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Their participation in the research had no impact on their grade for the childbearingcourse. All students in the class were required to do the writing assignments and were given participation points for the class; however, the students who volunteered to be a part of the study were also interviewed at the end of the semester. Prior to the completion of this study and in order to add rigor to the study, those participants who had volunteered were given an opportunity to comment on the emerging findings and interpretations of the data they had submitted.

Each student's participation was voluntary. A colleague, not the researcher, read a provided script explaining the study to ensure that students did not feel threatened or pressured in any way to participate in the study. As the teacher researcher I openly addressed any biases brought to this study as well as any type of influences the researcher had on the research participants (DiPardo, et al., 2006). Institutional Review Board

approval was obtained from both Oklahoma State University and a Midwestern

University prior to any data collection.

Participants signed an informed consent document and were given contact

information for the researcher and the committee chair for this dissertation. They were

informed verbally and in writing that at any time they could withdraw from the study

with no penalty.

<div align="center">**Trustworthiness**</div>

Trustworthiness in quantitative research deals with internal and external validity.

Internal validity enumerates how the instrument measureswith accuracy what it intends to

measure and external validity indicates how the study can be generalized to other

populations. (Herr and Anderson, 2005; Nieswiadomy, 2008)Several criteria affirm

credibility in qualitative research. Some of them are use of well established research

methods, familiarity with the culture of the organization, random sampling, triangulation,

tactics to ensure informants honesty, peer scrutiny of research and member checks

(Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985), however, list credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability as their criteria for trustworthiness. Castle (2012)

states,

- Credibility- How believable is the study and is the data authentic?

- Transferability - Are the study results applicable to other situations? Qualitative

  results are not considered generalizable, but some results might be transferable

  and that determination is made by the reader of the study.

- Dependability is an adequate description of the research procedure so that others

  can determine the trustworthiness of the procedure.

- Confirmability - Adequate documentation and rich description of data are given so others can confirm the results by evidence given.

Table 5 Trustworthiness

Component	Research
Credibility	Quotations from quick writes and interviews
Transferability	Quick writes can be used in a variety of courses, for a variety of results. Some results being building community, sharing information, and determination of information base.
Dependability	Thorough description of research procedure given in report.
Confirmability	Quick writes and interview responses quoted
Peer Scrutiny	Had two educators look at interview transcripts to confirm apparent themes
Member Checks	Research participants were given copies of quick writes and transcripts of interview to determine if data was accurate. Every participant said information was correct but was appalled at his/her spelling.

Table 5: A summary of how trustworthiness was accomplished in this qualitative study.

Data Analysis

The participants' written work was read and reread aloud by the researcher, who listened for language and the story. Van Manen (1990) talks about three approaches to isolating thematic text: "(1) the wholistic(sic) or sententious approach; (2) the selective or highlighting approach; (3) the detailed or line-by-line" (p. 92-93). The quick writes were analyzed using the holistic approach to look for lifeworld knowledge and cultural evidence that the participants share. The data was read three times prior to moving to the second thematic analysis. After the third reading the researcher then did selective highlighting with the fourth reading. A fifth reading was done after the initial highlighting was done to determine if the selective highlighting was complete. The next

reading was done line by line, carefully looking through the text and the highlighting to determine content and themes. The writing assignments used all three approaches in the analysis of the writing the participants submitted and were used to determine emergent themes. From those themes the teacher-researcher continued to analyze the data, looking at common and individual themes. Those themes are presented in a paradigmatic structure.

The data was then placed in tables to determine frequency of themes, to record the frequency of reading aloud and to be thorough concerning the data in a visual format. The interviews were transcribed word for word, and then read over several times prior to analysis. The transcribed interviews were also shared with two colleagues to strengthen trustworthiness by comparing the themes recorded by the colleagues. The interviews were then highlighted for themes and understanding of content. The results of this analysis will be reported in the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter gave a glimpse into the content that nursing students in the Nursing of the Childbearing Family are studying. It described the setting visually as well as verbally, and it gave a demographic description of the population that took part in this study. Teacher research, ethical considerations and trustworthiness were addressed in this chapter. The broad view of the methodology of this study was also described.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

"This is what it means to dwell in the space of the text, where the desire for

meaningfulness leads" (van Manen, 2006, p. 719).

In this chapter data and the theoretical framework will be linked together and the

two research questions will be explored as the data is reconstructed for understanding.

Van Manen looks at lifeworld through four lifeworld existentials, while Ekebergh views

the lifeworld through three attitudes.

Lifeworld Existentials

Four elements are connected to lifeworld. They are lived space, lived time, lived

body and lived human relations. Each of these elements will be considered for a better

understanding of the theoretical framework.

Lived Space

Lived space is the place where each of us dwells. Some of us dwell in the lived

space with knowledge of the space and others live oblivious to the lived space. Lived

space is a hard concept to verbalize because we often do not reflect on it, "yet we know

.

that the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel" (van Manen, 1990,p. 102). The space in which we live can drain us of all of our energy or it can energize us. It can be a place of joy and healing or it can be a place of depression. The lived space depends upon one's actions; however, most people only react to the lived space rather than reflect and then act in the lived space. Van Manen (1990) states that "lived space is a category for inquiring into the ways we experience the affairs of our day-to-day existence; in addition it helps us uncover more fundamental meaning dimensions of lived life" (p. 103). For example, when one finds herself in a church, the place often dictates expectations or actions. If onefindherself in a hospital, classroom, courtroom or dance studio, the space itself dictates action, behavior or life.

Because where the student learns is important for the purpose of this study, the learning environment was altered. The classroom space was used only for taking tests, and the nursing laboratory was used for instruction, simulation and for writing and reading aloud the quick writes. This lived space allowed the students to gather around a table in a face-to-face encounter rather than looking at the backs of headsas in a traditional classroom setting. The table in this lived space was a place for the students to have a writing surface but was minimized as a means of separation of students and instructor. This lived space also was conducive to interaction among student/student, student/instructor and student/content and simulation or hands on learning in a laboratory setting. Although the nursing laboratory is larger than a classroom, its clinic-like setting added to the students' learning space and the anticipation of a more interactive learning environment.

Lived Body

The lived body, according to van Manen (1990), is ". . . our physical or bodily presence we both reveal something about ourselves and we always conceal something at the same time—not necessarily consciously or deliberately, but rather in spite of ourselves" (p. 103). How the students present themselves in the learning environment reveals something about their personhood. Where they choose to sit, by whom they chose to sit and their body language in the classroom often reveals or conceals things about their lifeworld. We alter our lived body experience by our appearance. Students came dressed in casual clothing for the class and writing experience but were required to wear professional dress for all clinical settings and business casual dress for all presentations. Even dress or dress code played a part of the lived body experience.

The lived body is the actual physical presence of each person in the class. The physical presence of the students settled into a part of the lived space as students took ownership of specific physical placement in the learning environment, each assigning himself/herself to a specific place around the table. The students would often extend their physical presence to include their notes and/or textbook as part of their physical presence in the class. Students in the class were ethnically diverse, but it was not lost on the class that in this room the ethnic majority was now the minority and the ethnic minority was now the majority. During simulation in the laboratory the " modality of being" (van Manen, 1990, p. 104) was often under scrutiny as they participated in situations where they would put into action things they had read the night before andhad been only theory or words on paper. In a simulation experience, however, the theory became important pieces of the care of either a laboring woman or a newborn child. What had been simply

a definition of a term was now embodied in role play with actual physicality of manikin or client. The students' lived body now began to take on the meaning of acting out in the classroom, as well as the clinical setting, what it meant to be the nurse. In the classroom the lived body was their taking part in the care of the simulator, who responded according to the care students gave. In the clinical setting students dressed like professional nurses and they responded to the clients by giving hands on care as well as thinking through and acting on their pre-planned care plans.

Lived Time

Time is a social construct as we mark off seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years. Although this marking off of time seems inevitable, there is more to lived time than just its passing, but as individualswe interpret time and its passing differently."Lived time is subjective time as opposed to clock time" (van Manen, 1990, p. 104). It also encompasses the concept of "past, present, and future… of a person's temporal landscape" (van Manen, 1990, p. 104). It includes who studentsarenow asrelated to all past experience that left their traces on their personhood. The past can be altered under the influence of the present or the influence of the future. The students in this study bring who they are now with an understanding that a professional education will have a profound effect on who they will become. From the first semester the students were aware that lived time in the present was going to be consumed by study and preparation for class,that their experiences from being in college and having extra time would be changed as they became part of the nursing profession. Would their past be an asset to this altered existence or would it be a hindrance? Would their desire for the

future help the students in the challenges of learning that now were a part of their present?

For the purpose of this study, the lived time for the students was total immersion in one clinical course at a time. Monday through Friday for six to eight hours of the day time was dedicated to experiencing only the childbearing class. The students had to configure their thinking and their use of time in and out of the classroom into an immersion in the material rather than just an acceleration of the semester. Acclimation to this alteration to their lived time was an adjustment that the students struggled with at first;however, as the semester progressed the students apparently were able to make the necessary transition.

Lived Human Relation

Lived human relation impacts the social sense of the interpersonal space that one shares with those around him/her. It is in those interpersonal relationships that "we are able to develop a conversational relation which allows us to transcend ourselves" (van Manen, 1990, p. 105). Students develop a semblance of a community that has a duality in education. There is the relationship that they have as peers, which demonstrates its own rules and boundaries, but there is also the relationship that students develop with the instructor that embodies a different set of rules and boundaries. Balancing this duality is a challenge for both student and instructor.

In the educational setting a duality exists in the lifeworld: the relationship between student and student and student and teacher. In the lifeworld space the researcher attempted to alter the perception of the teacher's standing and facing the students, separated from them by lectern and student desks, and to alter the

students'ability to place added distance between student and student and student and teacher by purposely scattering students around the room. Lived human relations seem to be affected by perceived approachability. Sitting around a table manipulated the space to use it as a method of inclusion, and it also helped with human relations. The previous existentials of lived space, lived body and lived time were an integral part of lived human relations. The alteration of lived space took away many of the built-in barriers of the classroom to lived human relations. The alteration of time, having the class together in a learning environment for the extended time of six to eight hours, built into the lived human relations, and the fact that the students were physically present in the clinic-like setting, relying on one another in simulation situations, was a human relation builder. The relational act of sharing their thoughts and feelings through the written word and verbal reading of their quick writes also demonstrated an expression of lived human relations.

The four existential parts of lifeworld supplemented the experience of the quick writes. Altering the classroom space made the experience more interactive. The extended time allowed the students more exposure to one another which built more into the relationships among the students and between the teacher and students. The presence of students with their combined lifeworlds and cultures also impacted the space.

Three Lifeworld Attitudes

The following three attitudes also contribute to the lifeworld for the students. The natural attitude is life as it happens every day, the conscious recognition of the world around them. Reflective attitude is the rare but needed attitude to learn from lifeworld experience and make it less common and more visible. Finally, it is the open-minded attitude that allows the student's dissonance with what is and what could be to allow

construction of new knowledge. For this new knowledge to build there must be a

"secure and safe atmosphere, where …students dare to express the thoughts and feelings

that emanate for their reflections" (Ekebergh, 2007 p. 336-7).

Reflective Attitude

According to Ekebergh (2007),

Human consciousness is, according to this theory, always directed towards

something else than itself, which means that it is directed towards objects, both

concrete and abstract. The objects are always experienced as something, which

means that we always experience something with a particular meaning. (p.333)

Reflection does not happen during the lived experience itself. Reflection occurs

when one can slow down long enough to look back at the experience outside of the

experience itself. In that reflective opportunity come meaning and understanding. Quick

writes enabled students to reflect on many areas that in the past had just been part of their

everyday natural life, and because of this immersion the experience had obscured the

meaning from the individual.

For the purpose of this study every quick write took experiences directly from the

students' natural world and gave them time to reflect on those experiences. Each prompt

was pertinent to the course but also touched the lives of the students and because of the

reflection brought the students to a new awareness of themselves, their thinking and

sometimes their biases.

Natural Attitude

The security of the routine in life, life as usual,however, in the daily routine

learning is possible. Ekebergh (2007) defines the natural attitude as "… activity in which

humans are completely directed towards, immersed in, and absorbed by the activity, or

the being of the moment" (p. 333).Schutz and Luckmann (1989) state, "In the natural

attitude, everyone takes it for granted that other people live in the world, experience it,

and act in it 'exactly as I do'" (4). If lifeworld is left in the natural attitude of life in

action, it will remain elusiveand not scrutinized. The natural attitude is life as it happens,

and if it remains only life as it happens, many of the learning moments could or would be

lost.

> When humans experience various phenomena in the world, they already have a
>
> meaning for them. Through reflection we work with existing meanings, value
>
> sets and approaches. We discover and reconsider new versions of our experiences
>
> and our attitudes. The reflective experiences will be structured in consciousness,
>
> but what and how they are structured depends on earlier experiences. From this
>
> perspective it is obvious that the individual learning starts in earlier experiences,
>
> which is the base for the individual understanding. Accordingly the lifeworld is
>
> the platform for learning and through reflection the learning process starts and is
>
> continuously ongoing. Consequently, learning must always be understood in
>
> relation to the individual and his/her experiences added to the learning.
>
> (Ekebergh, 2007, p. 333)

The natural attitude must meet the reflective attitude for an everyday experience to

become a learning encounter; otherwise,they remain only happenings in life.

The prompts in this study were designed to tap into natural attitude experiences

for many of the students. The males and those female students who had not experienced

pregnancy or childbirth, however, had to rely on vicarious experiences or contextual

encounters for the basis of quick writes. The prompts related to gender, pain, expectation

of nursing school and sex education were in the natural attitude for all the students.

Other prompts dealt specifically with pregnancy, babies, parenting and expectations of

the baby. Female students who had never experienced pregnancy and males, who also

did not have any lifeworld experience to draw upon, had to rely on borrowed learning or

textual learning.

Open Mind Attitude

In the lifeworld context the open-mind attitude is

…to be able to acquire new knowledge. The students must be ready for leaving

'truths,' taken for granted, which are not replaced with absolute truths, but

through a conscious reflective act the knowledge becomes a new taken for granted

knowledge. (Ekebergh, 2007, p. 336)

Open-minded attitude requires being open to new ideas and to be able to see

beyond the present situation in order to see the big picture. It also means being able to

distance oneself from the natural attitude of the lifeworld and, with openness, to be able

to observe outside of what is obvious and look beyond what is taken for granted in the

world   Open-mindedness includes receptiveness to new experiences, the possibility of

being incorrect, knowing one's assumptions and bias and being able to maintain an air of

curiosity in regards to learning (Ekebergh, 2007). Students find the open-minded attitude

to sometimes cause chaos as they reflect on previous assumptions to there might be more

than one truth. It is this cognitive dissonance that happens when theory meets practice in

a student's experience that can lead to a deeper understanding (Ekebergh, 2007).

Quick writes allowed the students to reflect on their natural attitudes or upon textual facts they had acquired, but it was the voluntary reading aloud of those quick writes that gave the space for open-minded attitudes for students to risk learning about themselves, sharing themselves and learning from others who were willing to risk sharing themselves.

Prompts and Themes

As stated by van Manen (1990),

> …themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes we can navigate and explore such universes (p. 90).

After immersion into the quick writes there appeared several themes,some of the themes were seen in multiple prompts, while some were explicit to single prompts.

The prompts were directly related to the specific subject matter addressed in that particular class. The prompts were broad enough that the students could construct their quick writes as broadly or creatively as they wished. The students were given opportunities to read their quick writes to the class on a voluntary basis; however, the researcher read every quick write she wrote, but only after all the students who volunteered had read. The prompts were

1. What I know about pregnancy

2. Sex Ed Who/When/Where?

3. What does it mean to be Male/Female?

4. Pain that comes and goes

5. What I know about babies

6. What I expect from nursing school

7. Did you meet my expectations?

8. What does it mean to be a parent?

For the above prompts the following themes were identified:

Table 6: Common Themes Used in Quick Writes

Percent of Themes in all Prompts
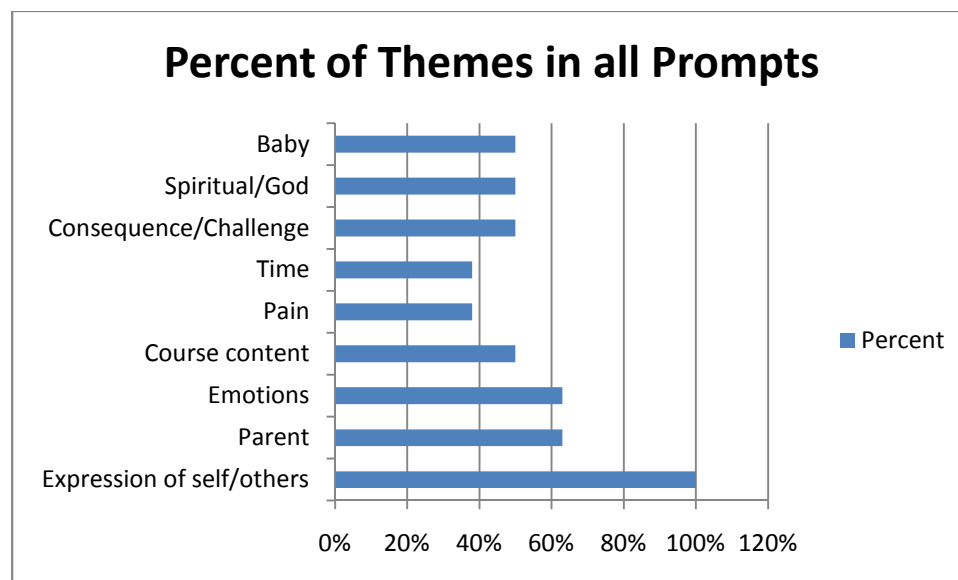
Table 6: Common Themes Used in Quick Writes. After deconstruction of the quick writes, several themes emerged. These themes were course content, expression of self or others, emotions, pain, parenting, time, consequences/challenges, baby/child and spiritual/God.

To uncover the thematic statements took several readings. The most prevalent theme was the expression of self or others. In the quick writes the pronoun I was used consistently. The more personal the writing, the more prominent this expression, and

thestudents' involvement was apparent in the reflection. Occasionally students would use such pronouns as<u>me</u>, <u>he</u>, <u>my</u>, <u>you</u>, <u>your</u>, <u>their</u>, <u>they</u>, <u>we</u>, <u>them</u>, <u>someone</u>, <u>him/her</u>, <u>myself</u>, and/or actually mention another person like <u>human</u>, <u>baby</u>, or <u>children</u>. The pronoun usage determined the closeness of the expression of self. When the participants used<u>I</u>, <u>me</u>, and <u>my</u> pronouns, it was an expression often of their natural attitude, and just the act of writing helped them with the reflective attitude.

The theme of emotions was expressed these terms: joyous, horrible, blessed, cry or crying, loved, wonderful feeling, worry, tears, emotional issues, great feeling, hopes, fears, great pride, disappointment. These expressions were seen in five different prompts: "What I know about pregnancy,""Pain that comes and goes,""What I know about babies,""What I expect from nursing school," and "What does it mean to be a parent?" Emotions are often a part of the existential of lived human relations and these expressions were used when the participants were talking about infants and parents. Emotions were also attached to the relationship between self and a concept, specifically pain and nursing school. In different responses various emotions were displayed. Emotions were expressed in the prompts "What I know about pregnancy,""Pain that comes and goes,""What I know about babies,""What I expect from nursing school,""What does it mean to be a parent?" For students to have a safe environment where reflection can evoke and allow the expression of emotion is just as much a part of education as impersonal facts.

Parenting was not only a theme, but it actually encompassed a whole quick write. The concept of parenting was noted in the following prompts: "What I know about pregnancy,""Sex ed who, when and where,""What I know about babies,""Did you

meetmy expectations?" and "What does it mean to be a parent?"The students used the actual word parent or alluded to the concept and role of parenting. It was not a surprise that parenting was a theme considering the nature of the course. For four of the participants the idea of parenting was a very prominent part of their lifeworld and their natural attitude, but others wrote from observation of their own parents or friends who were parents.

A host of other subthemes weaved their way through several quick writes. The theme of time referred to both actual and lapsed time and often was expressed in relationship to pregnancy. Pain was the concept of discomfort often associated with pregnancy and specifically with the labor process and the birth of the baby. One student actually connected this concept simply with being female in the prompt "What does it mean to be male or female?" Course content was a theme often seen because the participant did not have personal experience with the subject of a prompt. When the theme of gender was mentioned, the teacher-researcher had an opportunity to see gaps or misconceptions the students might have about the content. Consequences/challenges showed up in half of the prompts. The participants would use the term challenge or list a consequence of some action. Spirituality was expressed as a theme with the phrase "a gift from God" or "OMG" (Oh my God) and was seen in fifty percent of the prompts. The teacher-researcher did not mention her own spirituality in any of the prompts, but the students felt the freedom to do so. Baby/Child is the last common theme. The terms"baby" or "children"were used. Themes were chosen on the basis of expression or implication. Every theme which appeared was not included in the summation because

some themes were expressed in three or fewer prompts. Some themes were also exclusive to particular prompts.

The results here relate back to theory and to the literature review. The students expressed many themes in the quick writes that related to lifeworld theory as they expressed in their writing either their natural attitude or their reflective attitude. During the interviews they often expressed the open-minded attitude. The interview responses demonstrated several connections to the literature. For example, van Manen (1990) said that "writing teaches us what we know" (p. 127). Time after time the students shared they did not know they felt a certain way until they had an opportunity to write it down. Ekebergh (2007) stated that lifeworld theory is based in learning and reflecting on life experiences, and the quick writes gave the students the opportunity to reflect on life from an educational perspective within their lifeworld. The quick write related more to theory than expected. The interview participants expressed enjoyment of the activity of writing and reading because it gave them a voice and thathearing from others substantiated their feelings. They expressed a value in doing the quick writes and said that they wished they had done more. These participants validated the teacher-researcher's choice of quick writes as an educational tool and even enjoyed doing them.

<div align="center">**Interpreted Themes**</div>

Gender

In nursing we meet people at their most defenseless places, usually through illness or tragedy;however, in OB there is the promise and hope of another generation.Due to television, we have become "peeping Toms,"removing the sense of awe from witnessing a birth. Every year the students mention in class something they observed from a

<div align="center">84</div>

televised account of a birth on *Birth Story*; however, their observations are not a true understanding of the nurse's responsibility at a birth and this is what is needed.Everyone is aware of his/her gender at some level, but never is gender more showcased than it is in OB when the family announces with enthusiasm "It's a boy" or "It's a girl."

Because of the nature of the class, gender and gender differences are especially evident in this particular environment and clinical setting. Nursing today is a predominantly female profession. Although males are becoming a part of the profession, they are definitely the minority (Bell-Scriber, 2008; McMurry, 2011). Since the specialty of Maternal Newborn Nursing is composed predominately of female nurses and mothers, male students struggle with being able to comfortably perform many of the intimate assessments that must be done in this nursing specialty. One of the early quick write prompts was "What does it mean to be a male or female?" The students were not given more direction in the prompt and their responses were more about course content than the male/female issues of being the nurse. Participant A (male) responded:

A male has roles to perceive such as the head of the house, and sometimes the provider.

The male is a unique figure that has to have a female to feel supported

(Participant A, quick write to author, January 24, 2011).

This participant alluded to some of the traditional roles of a male in society but gave a less traditional response when he stated that only sometimes is the male the provider, which is now more of a reality in his lived time. The teacher-researcher was surprised by his response when he wrote "has to have a female to feel supported." The participant's

use of the phrase*has to have* rather than the word "*want"* and the use of *to feel supported* rather than "*to be supported"* seems to imply a different dynamic between the sexes.

One of the shortest responses in the quick writes occurred with this prompt when Participant B responded, "God's creation & a way that another life could be brought to the earth" (Participant B (female), quick write to author, January 24, 2011). This is not an excerpt but the entire response. This participant's short answer seemed to be what gave transcending value to her understanding of being female. This response differed from Participant A in that no mention of the opposite gender was a part of her definition, and even though it takes two to procreate, she did not mention the part the male plays.

Participant J wrote,

I am not exactly sure what it means to be male besides the fact they have different sexual organs than females. As a female you have to go through the experience of a menstrual cycle and if you choose the experience of child birth. (quick write to author, January 24, 2011)

This participant recognized the physical difference by genitalia but did not mention other differences because of her limitation as a female; she could not really "know" maleness. She was explicit about women's universal experience of menstruation but noted that child birth at some level was a choice for a female. Perhaps this, too, was an expression of this participant's lived time. Many in this generation have the idea that birth is a choice and no longer a consequence of sexual activity.

Personal Experience

Participants revealed what they knew in every response to a prompt. These responses were sometimes related to personal experience and sometimes related

tovicarious experience. At times it was strictly what they had read in the book. In response to "What does it mean to be a parent?" participant F revealed a personal experience with parenting, "It definitely means balancing out priorities, setting out schedules and maintaining a positive attitude or you can possibly go crazy" (quick write to author, February 22, 2011). Participant F is a student who has personally experienced single parenting and is caring for three small children ranging in age from six months to five years old. Her experience added a perspective for other students not from opinion or fiction but from her lived experience. This student read her quick write to the class knowing that not everyone knew what it meant to be a parent even though they had parents.

Some of the participants did not have much natural attitude to draw upon when they were doing their quick writes, so they revealed their knowledge not from personal experience but from what they had read in the textbook. According to the quick write "What I know about pregnancy," this response was given: "unison of sperm and ovum, weight gain, post-partum, cessation of menstruation cycle, woman carrying a baby for forty weeks" (Participant C, quick write to author, January 18, 2011).

Participant C is a male student and he will never experience pregnancy, but he was aware from the textof several things that scientifically were specific to pregnancy.He chose to write a list. His list had eleven items, but not all of the items were correct because also on his list was "baby growing in the placenta" (Participant C, quick write to author, January 18, 2011). The baby grows and there is a placenta, but the baby does not grow in the placenta. The placenta is a unique organ specific to pregnancy. It is attached on one side to the mother's uterus separating the mother's blood from the baby's blood,

andon the other side the baby is attached to the placenta by the umbilical cord that allows

nutrients and oxygen to be transported to the baby. Then the baby's waste products are

transported back to the placenta and ultimately to the mother's blood stream where they

can then be excreted.

Theoretical Learning

Even for students who were drawing on book knowledge, the quick writes

revealed a place where the need for more information and critical thinking could add to

their educational experience. Participant C did not choose to read his quick write

aloud,but he was still able to have a voice through his writing that could and would

enhance the learning experience for the other students.

One participant shared her vicarious learning in the prompt "What I know about

pregnancy."She wrote,

> I personally have never experienced it before but I will someday. But what I
>
> know is what I hear. It's painful…There are many scary moments as well. Like
>
> having it early… The baby can die or survive with damages. (Participant D,
>
> quick write to author, January 18, 2011)

This participant shared what she has heard from others' experience in her

lifeworld, but even with the "scary" parts she still voiced her plan to become pregnant

someday. She knew that although most of the time obstetrics is anemotionally satisfying

place, it doesn't always have a joyful ending.

Knowledge Ownership

The quick writes were intended to give students the opportunity to re-own their

knowledge in a more intimate manner (Nagin, 2006). Before re-owning something

onehas to discover what he/she knowsby removing filters. So many times studentscome with the assumption there is a right or wrong answer, and students filter things through that assumption. Through that filter students donot realize that it is through the process of learning that they come to an answer and that there may be more than one correct answer rather than "the correct answer."The filter of right and wrong answers is just one example of filters students and teachers may have that they are unaware of having. Everyone filters through his/her own personal historical grid. Quick writes eliminate many barriers that hinder students because no one can tell someone else that what he/she thinks is incorrect. The filters that students use when doing traditional writing appear when they have the opportunity to rewrite, revise and edit their writing, therefore allowing the writer to remove the missteps, the incorrect way to say something, or the opportunity to "thesaurus their way" to scholarly writing. When the participants desire only the correct answer it cheats the class out of good opportunities to conceptualize about unique answers or perspectives.

Participant H's response to the interview statement "Describe your experience with doing quick writes" is an illustration of re-owning knowledge. She stated,

The quick writes were definitely a joy to do and they also when writing them I had a few emotions come out that I didn't know about a specific subject that I had, so it kind of opened up my eyes to how I feel about certain things. I can't remember anything specific but I just know that after writing my quick writes I was like I didn't know I felt that way really about that but I guess I do. So it kind of helped with my bias against something because you know as a nurse that has to go out the door. (Female 3, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

For participant H, the quick writes helped reveal what she thought or felt because she was not hindered by her normal filters. When one has only five or ten minutes to express thoughts,there is no time for revising or rewriting. What is inside usually comes out. It is when one re-owns the unfiltered information that he/she can select what to do with that information. Participant H re-owned her knowledge as an opportunity for preparation for the future and a place to measure growth. It is when one can acknowledge his or her own thinking and biases that it can be determined to keep them, reframe them or discard them. Until one knows they are there, the person continues in his/her biases, oblivious to them and often unaware they are there.

Participant G's response to "Do you think it will be helpful in the future to continue being able to do quick writes?" reveals something similar.

> And you know your biases as well and know how you think cause that's important to know how you think then you know how you are going to do things and you can better prepare yourself for future circumstances whatever they may be and I think definitely the quick writes show you kind of like your thought process and how you think about certain things and then as you continue to grow…And so I definitely think the quick writes are a good thing just so you can know how you think and how you feel about certain topics. (Participant G, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 26, 2011)

This participant also agreed with van Manen (1990) about writing being the way we know what we know. These quick writes were affixed more in the affective domain, but they have been used strictly to encounter course content (Cliadas, 2010; Green, Smith III,

& Brown, 2007; Mason, Benedek-Wood, & Valasa, 2009; and Mason, Kubina Jr., & Taft, 2009).

Critical Thinking

A handful of things in nursing entail rote memory; for example, students need to know normal ranges for vital signs and normal ranges for basic laboratory values, but beyond that they need to know what it means when someone is outside those norms and what course of action totake when someone is outside those norms. That piece is critical thinking! Critical thinking is essential to nursing students and nurses in order for them to be able to give efficient, competent care to their clients (Marchigiano, Eduljee, & Harvey, 2011; Mun, 2010). Nursing students need to improve their critical thinking to pass the national standardized test after graduation and receive their registered nurse license. To do this, nursing students must get beyond rote memory to be able to apply and synthesize their learning and to be able to successfully navigate the testing for licensure.

Perhaps Participants I and E had not yet made the transition from rote memory to critical thinking,based on the following responses:

Student I's response to the quick write "What I expect from nursing school" was, "I also expect my nursing school to be my advocate understanding and concerned about my well-being. I expect my nursing school to respect me and I respect them…"

This participant's basic understanding of the institution of school may be over-reaching when he wants the school to respect him or be concerned for his well-being. It is unclear whether or not he was referring to the faculty. Perhaps rather than risking criticizing faculty, it was easier to refer to the institution of the nursing school. Or did he mean those persons, students, staff and faculty that make up the school of nursing?There

needs to be mutual respect between students and faculty to help foster learning, but learning needs to be accomplished by the student.

Participant E's response to the same prompt was, "I want my teachers to teach the things I need to know to become an exceptional nurse…" (Participant E, Quick Write to author, February 16, 2011).This participant seemed to be expressing a desire for the teacher to be the only one responsible for giving information so the participant will be able to regurgitate that knowledge back on a test. Have these participants gone beyond rote learning?

Participant A had a different response:

> What I expect from nursing school is to obtain knowledge about health and
> techniques that only use when needed. I expect it to be challenging and also good
> and bad times. I expect nursing school to be an opportunity to become a stronger
> person mind wise. I expect nursing school to make me a better critical thinking.
> (Participant A, Quick Write to author, February 16, 2011)

This participant seems to believe that skills and critical thinking are a part of the learning and that teacher and the student are in the task together.

Participant G's response to the same prompt was,

> I expect nursing school to prepare me for my career as a nurse, and to equip me
> with all of the skills to be a successful, competent nurse. I know experience in the
> field will help develop my skills, but I want nursing school to teach me the theory
> & reason for doing what they do. I want nursing school to challenge my way of
> thinking and teach me problem solving skills. (Participant G, Quick Write to
> author, February 16, 2011)

This participant also expressed the understanding that nursing was more than rote memory but required hands-on skills and problem solving that go beyond traditional learning from previous classes.

Participant C expressed his ideas about critical thinking and the quick writes in the interview as follows:

> It affected me pretty much because it gave me a reflection of what I am expecting to meet when I go out there as a nurse. For example if I can remember we had to write a quick write about our experience with pain and that gave me a good experience that whenever a patient is in pain he or she needs attention so I think it gave me a good experience that I will apply when I be a nurse. (Participant C, interview with Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

Participant C did not only re-own his knowledge in a more intimate manner; he was applying his quick write to his future, using critical thinking to make connections.

Results

The use of quick writes was a creative method for students to connect new learning with their established scaffolding of previous knowledge. The objective of this research is to observe the use of quick writes in the nursing classroom. Coupling the writing with reading aloud, the researcher was provided through the quick writes an opportunity to observe and reflect on connections in the classroom of students with students, students with teacher, and students with content. The themes from both the quick writes and the interviews reveal the connections between the writing and the reading from the student's perspective as well as looking through the lens of the researcher.The spring semester was accelerated into an eight-week semester with the

93

students attending the classroom two days a week, testing one day a week and the clinical component one day in the community setting and one day in the inpatient hospitalsetting. The students had one-week preparation in the laboratory prior to the clinical.

Obstetrics (OB) is a specialized experience for everyone involved, whether instructor, student, patient, parent or baby, because of its intimacy and the privilege that everyone has when witnessing new life. The OB department is a fast-paced arena that embodies pain, uncertainty, struggle, bodily fluids, vulnerability and nakedness. The end result has the potential of bringing great joy or immeasurable grief.

Because of the nature of the course several categories were a central focus of the data. The common themes that were prominent early in the analysis came from the words the students used repeatedly in their writing. After continued immersion in the data, there were themes through interpretation; "**the** meaning…emerged through data analysis through interpretation" (Patton, 2002, p. 478).

Student Recommendations

The act of writing preserves a snippet of time, thought and feeling. It gives the writer an opportunity, if he chooses, to look back to see if there was growth, or if his opinion changed, or if he was able to do something with the bias he discovered.

From the interviews the participants expressed the idea that to revisit the quick writes could show if there was growth or change:

Participant G, in response to "How I could do quick writes better," said,

Okay, I think we should do more of them. And I think we should keep track of like keep track of ones that you did this time and then after the class like maybe later on in the class or after the certain topic is discussed like write about it again

94

and see what else they could add to it or how they have changed their perspective.

I think that would be good idea cause like after going through the course and like

I could see I am now developing how I feel about these things but at the time

when I was writing them I didn't know much. You know like I didn't have much

to write about so I think more of them and revisiting previous topics would be a

good idea too (Participant G, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011).

Participant C's response to the same interview question was,

To me it is helpful and what I can recommend to have more quick writes because

these quick writes they reflect a lot to what we are doing or did in class. So I can

recommend you give two quick writes at a time maybe in the beginning of class

and at the end of class. (Participant C, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27,

2011)

One participant wanted considerable time between the quick writes, and one

wanted it done before and after the information was given. Nagin (2006) states that just

revisiting what one has originally written shows growth, but the participant believes

revisiting the prompts or writing before and after the class is necessary to measure any

growth. All three suggestions have value with the incorporation of quick writes.

Reading Aloud

The act of writing cannot be devoid of the act of reading aloud. When a person

readshis voice and inflection help reveal the meaning of what he writes. Often a writer

self-corrects as he reads, realizing that the pen did not keep up with the thoughts or left

out small words needed to make the sentence or thought flow. Reading implies there is

something to say, something that needs to be heard and is not just words on paper.

Reading, however,involves risks—risk of disclosure, risk of exposure, risk of criticism. Yet there are benefits to reading aloud. One such benefit is that after hearing what others have said one might discover a connection or kinship that, if the reading was left unsaid, would have been missed. The reading shares information, ideas and feelings that often strike a chord with others. With the marriage of these two activities we still see some participants not willing to risk reading because, for them, the risks outweighed the benefits; yet others felt it worth the risk and read multiple times.

Table 7: Reading Aloud of Prompts perParticipant

	Pregnancy	Sex Ed	Male/Female	Pain	Know Babies	Expect Nursing school	Meet expectations	Parent
A								
B	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes
C							Yes	
D		Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
E			Yes	Yes				Yes
F					Yes		Yes	Yes
G			Yes					
H	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes
I	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	
J	Yes				Yes			
K								
R	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 7: Reading Aloud of Prompts per Participant.Records each prompt and which participants read the prompts in the class room.

This table shows that some participants began by reading (like participant J), but for whatever reason they never read out loud again. Yet other participants like B, H, and I initiated reading and continued letting their voices be heard; they wanted to be heard. Some participants were selective when they read and did not read often but still wanted their voices heard on specific topics. One participant waited to do his only reading until

next to the last quick write. The participants read only on a volunteer basis, but the researcher wrote and read every quick write, hoping to show that she valued the writing and the reading equally. The question that arises then is, did the participants value the reading?

Participant D's response to "What did you notice about reading the writings aloud in class?"was as follows:

> That you see all types of attitudes, emotions, um feelings. Cause everyone isdifferent, everyone has been through different things so you got to see just a variety of things. (Participant D, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

Participant D was a student who risked reading. When asked if she read and how she felt about reading, she said, "Yes I did read. I liked it, I liked expressing myself. I just liked saying my point of view" (Participant D, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 26, 2011).

Participant E's response to the same question was,

> Like I guess it's a good practice specially for people like me because usually I am not the one who asks a lot of questions in the class as you have noticed I guess or like I read things out loud that often as compared to other students. So like constantly doing this and pushing students like me like to speak about how they feel and I guess it puts you in a different comfort level in the class and then also like helps them change their personality a little bit like from being more over like being an introvert to being an extrovert in a good way like you know a person can speak out what he feels. (Participant E, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 26, 2011)

This participant considered himself an introvert, and reading his quick writes helped him to become more of an extrovert.

Participant G's response to the reading question was:

> I noticed that the people that did have shared what they had written down um had put a lot of thought and introspection into what they wrote. They based it on their personal experiences as well as whether they had seen other things and so I think that is probably what I noticed the most that the same people shared and they always had you know a lot to say about that specific topic. (Participant G, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

> Participant G read only once, but when asked in the interview if she read, her

response was revealing,

> I am willing to share but I didn't, I wasn't willing to share if I didn't go early on and hear you know if I shared before I heard other peoples and I was more comfortable but after hearing some of the other ones that had a lot more thought and a lot more experience behind it I was a little bit more timid to share.
>
> (Participant 2, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

This participant appeared to have prejudged her writing, and once someone else shared, it shut her voice down. She wanted to read only if she had not heard other voices first because she did not want to appear less thoughtful in her response. She stated that because her experience and life world were different or more limited, it made her less likely to read aloud.

Participant H's response to that question was,

…it's just interesting to hear how other people felt about whatever situation was it could have been different from how you felt but at the same time everybody has their own opinion so nothing that you could get upset about even though deep down inside you're thinking like Oh my God I can't believe that's true,…(Participant H, interview by Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011)

Participant H, wanted to hear other students' voices and realized it was the individual's opinions or thoughts, and that is what gave it value.

It is unclear if they enjoyed reading, but they all enjoyed hearing the quick writes. When the participants were asked if they remembered any particular quick write that was read, most of the participants mentioned the quick write on "Did you meet my expectations?" and a couple of participants specifically mentioned the quick write by Participant F.

I am very happy that God blessed me with you. I always wanted a boy and those nights I stayed up wondering if I should have you. God spoke to me and allowed me to realize that it's not up to me, if I want you or not. He sent you to me no matter if it was my surprise or planned, you are truly a gift. I don't regret anything about having you. I have no complaints, because without you, there would be no me. Who I am today; Patient, kind, caring, faithful, understanding, humble, happy. In true love. I am a mother to you and I thank God every moment, with every breath I take, for sending me an angel. My First love. (Participant F, quick write to author, February 21, 2011)

Summary

The findings from the data were presented in this chapter in such a way to look at the data from two different perspectives. The students writing from the prompts and their subsequent interviews were woven together and connected back to the theoretical framework. The quick writes revealed the students lifeworlds in various ways. In the interviewsthe students expressed that reading aloud was just as important as writing. The students expressed that reading aloud gave them a voice, and even those who did not read much voiced that the reading was an important part of the quick writes.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

"It is in the act of reading and writing that insights emerge" (van Manen, 2006, p. 715)

What do nursing students reflect through quick writes? They write what they know. Some discovered their biases. Students saw writing in a new light, not as a high stakes grade but instead as an opportunity to share and explore what they had inside. They wrote about their experiences, their feelings, their understandings and their readings, but they wrote.

What happens when nursing students read their writing aloud? Students have a voice, the students discovered that they were not empty vessels waiting to be filled, and instead, they had experiences, thoughts, feelings and knowledge of their own. Even if they did not read or only read occasionally they wanted to hear what their classmates had written. They discovered that their words had value and they realized their classmates' words had value. I was hoping to hear them say that it helped build community, the students never actually stated it, but in their own way I believe they did.

Discussion

The early quick writes in this research were often short and content laden, but the more the students wrote, the more they reflected their lifeworld. The students whose natural attitude had already experienced the rich world of obstetrics as a patient brought these experiences into their writing and into their learning and sharing. As the participants read aloud they often found they had a voice and that their voice was as valid as the teacher-researcher's voice. They discovered things about themselves, about their

classmates and about the teacher-researcher that would have been lost in the "sage on the stage" schema. The quick writes also gave participants a different place to start learning as they connected with what they already knew.

After deconstructing the written data into the various themes I could see that the participants brought their natural attitude totheir writing as they expressed themselves using the pronoun "I" and expressed some type of emotion over and over in the quick writes. Course content was evident in varying degrees in the participants' writings due to the fact that some students were limited in their natural attitude or experience with obstetrics. The more limited the experience, the more obvious the course content.

> I found myself not writing the full length of time and starting off really slow…I haven't experienced a lot of the things you asked us to write about. So some of the things that you had us write about I wrote specifically the scientific aspect because I know that opposed to like really feelings… (Participant G, interview with Lynnie I. Skeen, April 27, 2011).

Even though this student was a female, she had not experienced pregnancy or infants personally or even vicariously.

> Some of the questions were geared of course toward pregnancy as a male I have really no experience with that so that was kind of hard to write about so you have to stick with the scientific…statements (Participant I, interview with Lynnie I. Skeen, April 26, 2011).

When the natural attitude is missing, the participants had to rely on course content to express something besides a blank page. When the participants relied solely on course content, of self expression was obviously missing.

The prompts were also imaginative in nature because they could be emotionally charged. During pregnancy many parents choose to find out the gender of the baby after sixteen weeks so they can pick names and prepare the nursery and wardrobe for their child. Sometimes the fetus cooperates and proudly spreadsits legs to let its gender be known. Sometimes, however, the baby does not cooperate or parents decide they want to be surprised at birth. All parents have a preference, and if the baby is the opposite of that preference there is some disappointment. If one has only boys,perhaps her heart can be set on having a girl. What happens if the baby is another boy? The prompt "Did you meet my expectations?" tried to get at the concept of disappointment. What if the baby was not the gender hoped for, or what if the infant had a birthmark that could not be covered? What if there was some external anomaly that would cause a financial or physical strain on the parents? Even after explaining the prompt the participants still struggled, so teacher/researcher explained the prompt as if parents wanted a girl and got a boy. This prompt was the prompt that the participants mentioned in the interview as memorable and that they found emotional. Even though the teacher/research expected them to understand disappointment, they wanted to express acceptance. They chose to express an open-minded attitude rather than disappointment.

Connection with Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use writing to help students connect their previous knowledge with the new content presented in a nursing course. The writing modality that the students were exposed to was quick writes. The prompts that were used in the course were specifically chosen to have students address and focus on an aspect of obstetric nursing. From the prompts fifty percent of the time the students wrote about

class content. From the analysis of the data, students who had life experience tended to write more about the life experience making connection to the content and those students who did not have life experience tended to only write down the content from their textbooks.

Limitations

The accelerated classroom setting was both a benefit and a limitation. The fact that the class was completed in eight weeks made it difficult to plan for a quick write in every class period. A snow storm in January also caused some of the class time to be done online rather than in a face-to-face setting, which limited the time to do quick writes. Absences also skewed some of the data because all the participants were not in class. There is no generalizability to the study.This study originally was planned for the first and second semester in the nursing program. Due to late IRB approval the first semester was not used. The lack of the first semester limited the data that would have been over thoughts and feelings concerning students' first experiences in the clinical world. The emergent themes that were identified may have been analyzed differently if a different researcher were used.

Implications

Quick writes have an important position in academia because if students give only content in a quick write it is rote knowledge; it is only in personal experience with content through reflection that a connection is made to lifeworld. Memory is not reflection. Reflection combines lifeworld and content to make correlations to new knowledge. If knowledge only remains content and does not connect to lifeworld, then content remains only theoretical.

If the quick write is only pen to paper and is never verbalized, it is isolating and insolates the writer. By being read aloud, the quick writes allows others to connect, agree, disagree or be challenged to change their understanding of "truth," lifeworld, or culture. Students repeatedly stated they enjoyed and valued hearing what their classmates read. The oralquick writes disputed their natural attitude or validated their natural attitude, but either way it took them out of isolation and into new knowledge.

This experience has made quick writes a viable methodology for the teacher/researcher, who wants to remain agogical, learning alongside the students. Quick writes is valuing writing, reading, culture, lifeworld, voice and is a place of inclusion and reflection. Prompts need to be broad and culturally sensitive if students are to be challenged to approach the open-minded attitude.

The teacher/researcher will continue to write with the students about each prompt and will continue to read my writing to the class. Taking time in class to do quick writes validates the importance of writing and reflecting; doing it with the students makes it not just another assignment but a joint venture in expression.—"impression without expression leads to depression" (anonymous). The quick writes giveall who participate an opportunity to express themselves. Reading should remain voluntary because everyone has a personal preference of what he/she is willing to share. The reading is just as important as the writing; growth comes from both. The teacher's doing the writing and reading makes it pedagogical as well as a personal connection with the students.

Each course is unique with its content, its level of learning and method of presentation. Even with differences, quick writes can be adapted to the class and the students. If the prompts are well thought out beforehand and varied (visual, auditory, or

just a basic question) an outlet is given or the affective domain as well as revealing gaps in content understanding.

In a broader sense, the quick writes technique is a methodology which helps teachers explore the lifeworld of their students, realizing that everyone looks at life and learning through a personal grid and that no student comes in a blank slate or an empty cup. Pedagogically it is sound for teachers to discover where their students are so that they can keep from going where the students do not need to go. This methodology also shows gaps in the students' knowledge or misunderstandings of the content that will help the teacher direct the students into a clearer understanding.

Quick writes can change the classroom from the sponge mentality to a vibrant interactive space, a place where students' voices are encouraged and valued. This methodology can also make writing a natural part of every class rather than just a dreaded assignment at the end of the semester. It provides an avenue for students to explore normal and controversial subjects and to hear a wide variety of responses which potentially could open up opportunities for dialogue that would otherwise be left unexplored.

Implications from Students

In the nursing classroom if it is important to hear students' voices teachers need to be aware that students do not want to risk having their voice negated by the professor. From this research it became apparent from the interviews that the students wanted a voice, but for some students the risk far outweighed the gain. Participants shared that even if they did not read they wanted to hear what other participants had written. It gave them insight into their classmates as well as insight into themselves.

The participants had opinions and some recommendations for future classes:

1. Participants felt that quick writes had value to them and would likely have value for future students.

2. Participants requested that there be more quick writes rather than fewer.

3. Participants stated that it would be beneficial to have a quick write to start the class and one to finish the class.

4. Participants requested that there be a mix of content and reflection (affective) type quick writes so that both sets of voices could be heard.

5. One participant recommended that some of the quick write prompts be revisited later in the course so students could measure or see their growth.

Much of what the students shared in the interviews confirmed the literature on the value of writing and the benefits it brings to the classroom as well as to individual students. One student even stated, "I think it's a good thing (quick writes) I like it. I think it should happen in all the classes, well not all the classes but a lot of the classes" (Participant D, interview with Lynnie I. Skeen, April 26, 2011).

Implications for Nursing

Nurses have understood that nursing has an affective component that needs to be addressed, and in the past we have addressed this area through the use of journaling. The drawback to using journaling is that it is used only in the clinical area and it often deals with issues after they have happened. When situations happen in clinical, students are often embarrassed or disturbed by theseunexpected events. The use of quick writes will give students an opportunity to reflect and think about issues or situations ahead of time rather than after the fact. Quick writes and the reading aloud of quick

writesallowsstudents to look at ethical issues or professional conflicts ahead of time and it provides them an occasion to consider them from several different perspectives. It is an occasion for students to become more self aware.

If nursing faculty in every clinical course would incorporate and support theuse of quick writes,faculty and students will be able to contemporaneously see the process of learning.Students should keep their writing in one quick write journal throughout the nursing curriculum; doing so would allow students to see their growth and instructors could see more of their students' lifeworld's. Lifeworld experiences have an impact on the ways nurses care and treat their clients. The use of quick writes is a method for the nursing profession to give students and faculty a technique to deal with lifeworld and the affective domain in a safe environment.

Implications for the researcher

This research has made me aware that nurses and nursing students need an approach they can use to deal with being self aware. Who we are and our personal lifeworld's impacts how we care for clients, understanding our biases and our blind spots could help us better care for those in our charge. I would like to continue doing research on quick writes which would include other faculty to perhaps observe if the contemporaneous use of quick writes by faculty and students would open up areas of self awareness to better enhance the care nursing students and ultimately nurses give to their clients.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

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The teacher/researcher recommends for future studies that doing quick writes for more than one semester may be helpful for growth. If there had been more time and

more quick writes, because of the diversity of the students it would have been interesting to see what part culture would play in the responses. It would be of interest to revisit the gender quick write from a different perspective—not just what it meant to be male or female as an individual—but for nursing students to begin to think about what it means to be a male or female nurse. Quick writes are a healthy avenue for nursing students to deal with both affective domains as well as intellectual or theoretical domains. Ethically and personally nursing puts the student in touchy situations with the clients as well as with other professionals. Students' can be eased into understanding and dealing with those situations if they had the opportunity to write about it ahead of time. The ethical issues that face nurses and nursing students on an ongoing basis are areas that quick write would be a catalyst for exposing biases, cultural differences, and even gender differences.

Quick writes lend themselves well to the affective domain that is part of nursing;however, even the students wanted to see them developed more toward content and critical thinking. A mixture of quick write prompts would be an answer to this need,or even developing a new type of writing where students would do serial writing over topics or write over the same topic from different perspectives. All of the above writing could be done in a quick write format where, time is limited. Grammar issues would be eliminated because in quick writes it is the content that is of interest, not just writing "correctly."Having different students be responsible for looking at the content of the class and coming up with quick write prompts for their classmates would add a new wrinkle to quick writing.   Reif (2002) felt that for quick writes to be effective they must be well thought out and that teachers needed to participate in writing with the students.

Several significant questions were not dealt with in this study.

1. Does the students' previous writing experience make doing quick writes easier or more challenging?

2. How does age impact the content in quick writes?

3. What other types of writing would enhance or assist students in connecting with text and critical thinking?

4. What difference would it make for students if they were allowed to revisit quick write prompts later in the semester?

5. What benefit is there to having students do quick writes at the beginning and the end of the same class? Should the prompt be the same for both writes?

6. What would happen if students passed their quick writes to the left and then had them read by students who did not write them?

7. What would happen if students were given more or less time to write?

8. What difference would it be if in a quick write students had specific limitations to the writing, i.e., they had to rhyme, or use metaphors, or describe pain without using any adjectives?

9. What difference would it make in a nursing classroom that was agogical and the voice of the teacher and the student were equal?

10. Would the setting change the quick write?

11. What differences do demographics make to quick writes?

Summary

In conclusion, quick writes have a place in education for both content and the affective domain. The nursing classroom is ideal for both, for situations can be emotionally and intellectually charged. Nursing students, who, as part of their future

career, have to physically touch places that are personal and potentially embarrassing may find that quick writes allow an opportunity to reflect on this difficult issue. For nursing students who have never personally experienced trauma, tragedy, serious illness, extreme pain or the death of a loved one, quick writes are a place to explore those fears or emotions. For difficult content and the critical thinking that nursing students need to learn on a regular basis, writing is an avenue to develop and demonstrate reflection and growth. Whether emphasizing content or the affective domain, quick writes not only give a voice but a lesson and can be a mirror in which students see themselves as nurses.

Reflections

I feel blessed to have experienced two careers that have captured my heart and soul. About the time that I was the age of many of my students now, I embarked on the journey to become a nurse. My first exposure to nursing was on a post partum floor in a moderate size hospital in a Midwestern state. There I fell in love with the area of maternity and knew that was what I wanted to focus on in nursing school. I have spent years learning and honing the skills it takes to be experienced and competent in a high technology and high adrenaline field. It also just happened to be the most litigious arena in medicine. My lifeworld consisted of assisting women who were in pain to navigate the journey from womanhood to motherhood. I have never personally experienced pregnancy and childbirth but have had a career as a nurse. I learned how to assist women through childbirth with only minimal pain relief. I was often asked to care for women who chose to go natural of free of medical intervention in childbirth.

I knew that as a nurse I could touch the lives of only the patients I was privileged to have in my care. I also know that as I aged the physical tasks of aiding in the delivery of babies would become more difficult. It was at this juncture in my lifeworld that I discovered the second career that has captured my imagination and my passions,and that is being a nursing educator.

I walked into the classroom originally teaching the way I was taught. I shared with the students many of the stories of the patients for whom I had cared, and I gave them information they would need to pass tests in the course. All that I expected from my students was to learn and regurgitate back to me what I had told them as I stood behind a lectern and they sat in a traditional classroom with space between them and me. It did not take me long to discover that being a competent obstetric nurse did not make me a competent educator. It was then that I decided to enroll in a doctoral program to hone my education skills so they would be at the level of my nursing expertise. I discovered that there was much more to teaching than standing in the front of a classroom, and there was much more to learning than giving back the professors words to the professor. As a result of my lifeworld journey into education, I have looked for methods and opportunities to challenge and engage my students in an agogical environment. The use of quick writes in the classroom has been a means to practice agogically, to know that students have something to say, and to give them a voice that would not be cancelled by this teacher.

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APPPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IN-CLASS RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

[Third party/instructor reads to student]

Each of you is invited to be a research participant in a study being conducted by Lynnie I.

Skeen a doctorate candidate of OSU's School of Teaching & Curriculum Leadership.

She is seeking information about the use of Quick Writes with nursing students and its

use in the classroom to connect new knowledge with students existing knowledge.

Those who agree to be research participants will allow the researcher to use as research

data your Quick Writes in the classroom in response to prompts. You will also be given

an opportunity to volunteer for an end of semester interview in the spring semester. All

students will be doing the Quick Writes in the classroom and will receive participation

points for writing; however, only those students who volunteer their Quick Writes as data

and those who volunteer for interview participation will have their data included as part

of the research study. All students will do the Quick Write assignments and read their

writing aloud in class as part of class participation, and all students will receive

participation points for doing these in class assignments.

I will pass around the consent forms. If you agree to be part of this research please sign

the consent form and place it in the manila envelope. If you would rather not be part of

this research study, that is fine, too. There is no reward for participating and no penalty

for not participating in the study. Your participation or non-participation will not effect

your grade or your standing in this course.

After the consent forms have been collected and placed in the manila envelope, I will seal the

envelope and give it to the researcher, so I won't even know whether or not you are participating in the research study.

For Third Party/Instructor:

1. Read script aloud to students

2. Pass around consent forms and manila envelope.

3. After students have put consent forms in envelope, seal it and send to:

   Lynnie Skeen, 232 Allied Health Center

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Age: _____

Race:

    Black _____
    White _____
    Hispanic _____
    African _____
    Native American _____
    Other _____

Marital Status:

    Single _____
    Married _____
    Cohabitating _____
    Divorced _____

Education Status:

    First generation to attend college _____
    Second generation to attend college _____
    Everyone in family expected to attend college _____

Gender:

    Female _____
    Male _____

APPENDIX C

Proposed Interview Questions

Interview

The interview will be open ended and be directed by student responses. Questions

will be similar to the following:

1. Describe your experience with writing this semester.

   What did you like?

   What did you dislike?

   What would you like to be added?

   What would you like to be different?

2. Tell me what you noticed about reading the writings aloud in class.

   Can you give examples of what you have observed?
3. How have the quick writes affected your thinking about your future work as a nurse?
4. What quick writes do you remember best? *This could refer to:*
   Your own writing
   Another student's writing
   A particular prompt
   A memory of a response that was read aloud in class

Informed Consent Form

Project Title:
Investigating Quick Writes in Nursing School

Investigators:
Lynnie I. Skeen Ph.Dc., Oklahoma State University School of Teaching & Curriculum Leadership
Pam Brown, Ed.D., Advisor, Oklahoma State University School of Teaching & Curriculum Leadership

Purpose:
This Teacher Research study seeks to look at Quick Writes in a nursing course and observe the connection between writing and learning. This is a study that involves samples of your writing that will be used as a data set. You have been invited to participate because you are a junior student in the nursing program. This study will be looking at the relationship between your writing and your learning about nursing.

Procedures:
Your participation will consist of allowing the researcher to include your in-classQuick Writes as research data. You will be asked a few questions concerning age, gender, race and whether you are a first generation college student. All students will be given a variety of prompts for Quick Writes and an opportunity to read aloud your writing in class during the normal classroom procedure Only those who agree to participate in this research study will have their Quick Writes used as data by the researcher.Near the end of the spring semester there will be an individual interview conducted by the researcher which will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete. Only research participants who agree to do so will participate in the interview process. In the interview, participants will be given an opportunity to talk about experiences with writing, reading, and learning in the classroom. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed: you will be given an opportunity to review the interview content for accuracy and clarity.

Risks of Participation:
There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits
The benefits to you as participant may include, but are not limited to: a better understanding of content in the class, improved writing skills, and possible new modality for learning . The researcher may benefit publication arising from this study by learning more about how students can use Quick Writes in the classroom.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept on a designated flash drive and locked in a file cabinet at the researchers home. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of data from this study to protect the identity of research participants.

The records of this study will be kept private. Data collected from writing and interviews will be stored in Word, or NVivo files on a flash drive in a locked file cabinet at the home of the principal investigator. Data will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the study.

Any written result will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safe guarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this research study. All of the students in the clss and research participants will be given participation points for doing the writing assignments regardless of participation or non-participation in the research study.

Contacts:
If you have questions or concerns you may contact the principal investigator Assistant Professor Lynnie I. Skeen MS, RN at 232 Allied Health Center, Langston, OK 73050, 405-466-3426 liskeen@lunet.edu or Associate Professor Dr. Pamela Brown at 237 Willard Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-8004, pamela.u.brown@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you can contact Dr. Sheila Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:
As a research participant, you have the right to discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty. Participation is voluntary and the decision will have no impact on your class grade or class activities.

Participant Signatures:
I agree to the following:

Date:_____

_____ You may use my Quick Write responses as research data.
    (Signature)

_____ I am willing to be an interview participant in this research study.
    (Signature)

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Friday, December 03, 2010

IRB Application No ED10124

Proposal Title: Quick Writes in Nursing School as a Learning Tool

Reviewed and   Expedited
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 12/2/2011

Principal
Investigator(s):

Lynnie I Skeen   Pamela Brown
232 Allied Health Center   237 Willard
Langston, OK 73050   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Lynnie Irene Skeen

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy/Education

Thesis: VOICES FROM THE PEN AND PAGE:QUICK WRITES FOR NURSING
STUDENTS

Major Field: Curriculum and Social Foundations

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy/Education in
Curriculum and Social Foundations at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater,
Oklahoma in May, 2012.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Nursing at University
of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma2000.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing at
University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 1993.

Experience: Assistant Professor at Langston University, teaching in the nursing
department since 2000. Practicing Registered Nurse since 1982,
specializing in Obstetric Nursing since 1985.

Professional Memberships:
Phi Kappa Phi   2006 – Present
AERA   2004 - Present
Sigma Theta Tau   1999 - Present
American Nursing Association   1998 - Present
AWHONN   1999 - Present

.

Name: Lynnie I Skeen   Date of Degree: May, 2012

Institution: OklahomaStateUniversity   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: VOICES FROM THE PEN AND PAGE:QUICK WRITES FOR
                 NURSING STUDENTS

Pages in Study: 131   Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy/Education

Major Field: Curriculum and Social Foundations

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to use quick writes as a
     creative method for nursing students to connect new learning with previous
     knowledge. Quick writes give students the opportunity to observe their thoughts
     and understanding of content objectively. Reading the quick writes aloud allows
     students to consider information from the perspective of others. This was a
     qualitative study which involved eleven nursing students. Data was collected
     through quick writes and interview. Using narrative inquiry, hermeneutics, and
     lifeworld theory, the data was analyzed through a interpretivist perspective.

Findings and Conclusions: Data analysis demonstrated that students with minimal
     lifeworld experience wrote from basic content from the textbook. Those with
     lifeworld experience wrote from their experience and connected it back to
     content. In the interviews they stated that reading the quick writes in class was
     valuable. Even if they did not read or only read occasionally they wanted to hear
     what their classmates had written. They discovered that their words had value
     and they realized their classmates' words had value.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Pamela U. Brown