

ENGAGING IN LEARNING TOGETHER: A THEORY OF UNDERGRADUATE  
NURSING STUDENTS' POLITICAL LEARNING

by

Pamela Marie Gehrke

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Boise State University

December 2012

© 2012

Pamela Marie Gehrke

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

**DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS**

of the dissertation submitted by

Pamela Marie Gehrke

Dissertation Title: Engaging in Learning Together: A Theory of Undergraduate Nursing Students' Political Learning

Date of Final Oral Examination: 26 October 2012

The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student Pamela Marie Gehrke, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Susan Martin, Ph.D.	Chair, Supervisory Committee
Jennifer Snow, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Leonie Sutherland, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Stephanie Witt, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Susan Martin, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed this doctoral journey without the assistance of many wonderful people. My husband, Craig Gehrke, has been a constant source of loving support and encouragement. He took me to my first public hearing, which push started my own civic journey. My children, Megan and Mark Gehrke, said “Go Mother!” at every stage of study, also contributing humor, house cleaning, and keeping me focused on what is truly important in life. Mark provided instruction to my class as a political intern at the time of this study. Megan made me a “Word Wizard” talisman to channel positive energy for writing. I am deeply grateful.

Dr. Susan Martin chaired my committee, and her mentoring and sharing of the joys and challenges of qualitative research have helped transform me into a teacher researcher. Her positive energy and critique guided my writing. Her joy in excellent teaching and learning has supported and sustained me through this process. Dr. Jennifer Snow, Dr. Leonie Sutherland, and Dr. Stephanie Witt provided unfailingly appropriate guidance that helped me crystallize foundational knowledge yet gave room to stretch and grow. I appreciate the gifts of time and thoughtful care in their critique and advice along the way.

I am grateful for the insight and questions of critical reviewers, Dr. Vivian Schrader and Dr. Shoni Davis. Dr. Emily Gibson provided crucial help in reliability checking, and graduate student and colleague, Julie Carr, aided with recruitment. Dr.

Cindy Clark provided advice on presenting research. To my School of Nursing colleagues and friends, I am sincerely touched by your support and faith in me during this long journey.

Thank you to the participants who shared their learning journeys with me and the many students of *NURS 420 Policy, Power & Voice* I have had over the years. I wish you empowerment and joy in your nursing careers.

Finally, I am sincerely grateful to my parents, Thomas and Beverly Hackwith, my sister, Debbie Liske, and my brothers, Jim, Delvin, Rod, and Aaron Hackwith. My parents fostered a deep appreciation for education and an ethic of hard work enabling all of us to attain life-changing education and live our lives with integrity and purpose. Their faith, knowledge, and values are reflected in each of us.

## ABSTRACT

Health care and nursing are political, and nurses need to be at policy decision-making tables. Graduate nursing education prepares nurses for policy roles, but little research exists about *what* political and policy education is taught to undergraduate nursing students or *how* they learn the concepts, skills, and disposition for political and policy work. Nurses need education for civic engagement and political advocacy in their undergraduate professional education. A study was done to learn how undergraduate nursing students made sense of civic engagement concepts like political advocacy and policy making in an online blended, required *Policy, Power & Voice* course in one nursing curriculum.

Constructivist grounded theory methods guided design and conduct of this study. Interviews of fourteen students after completing the course provided rich data that led to a theory of political learning, *Engaging in Learning Together*. Four primary processes were involved in participants' learning: *Push Starting Learning*, *Doing the Work*, *Learning Online Together*, and *Making it Real*. These four processes resulted in *Learning Deeply* for most participants, which contrasted with previous experiences of "learning by checklist." *Engaged learning* was defined as a promotive, synergistic learning process involving self, peers, teachers, and/or others, requiring investment of one's physical and mental capabilities along with a positive commitment of spirit and energy. Put simply, it is learning in relationship with others that involves head, hands, and heart.

By course end, all participants related changes in their understanding of political processes. In addition, they had new perspectives of the nursing discipline and nursing's current and potential involvement in political processes and policy making. They began a journey of *Becoming Political*.

Three study conclusions were: 1) *Engaging in Learning Together* emerged as a substantive theory of learning for undergraduate nursing participants' political and policy course learning. 2) Engaging with peers, the instructor, and others in a blended online course contributed to deep learning and strengthened habits of learning. 3) Embedding civic engagement learning within a disciplinary focus provided a positive context for professional formation and fostered development of participants' knowledge, skills, and disposition for political and policy advocacy work in the profession.

The theory has potential, in similar contexts, for guiding nurse educators' curricular and pedagogical decisions, course design, and instructional strategies when teaching political and policy advocacy to undergraduate students. It raises questions about civic engagement learning for undergraduate and graduate nursing students and the potential impact on graduates' future nursing practice. Incorporating distinct opportunities for gaining civic and political knowledge with practice in policy processes from the beginning of nurses' education may help them see these skills as fundamental to their nursing practice as taking vital signs. The ultimate aim is to foster a disposition in undergraduate students toward civic engagement in communities and use of political processes and policy making in their professional nursing roles.

*Key words:* nursing education, policy education, online learning, engaged learning, civic engagement, learning theory, qualitative research

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
My Journey as a Political Nurse Educator .....	5
Study Integrity and Legitimacy .....	8
What Kind of Research Counts?.....	9
Significance of This Research for Nursing.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
Civic Engagement in Higher Education and Nursing Education.....	16
Civic Engagement Defined.....	17
An Overview of Civic Engagement in Higher Education .....	19
Factors Influencing Civic Engagement Education in Higher Education .....	19
Why Educate for Civic Engagement in Higher Education? .....	28
Brief History of Civic Engagement in Nursing .....	32
Forces Impacting Civic Engagement in Nursing Education.....	34
Civic Learning Practices in Nursing Education.....	42
Summary of Civic Engagement in Nursing .....	48
Why Educate for Civic Engagement in Nursing?.....	49



Pedagogies of Engagement for Civic Learning .....	54
What is Engagement in Civic Learning? .....	55
Commonalities of Pedagogies of Engagement .....	59
Pedagogies of Engagement and Blended Online Learning.....	68
Selected Learning Frameworks for Civic Engagement .....	73
Summary in Relation to NURS 420 and This Study .....	78
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Constructivist Grounded Theory Overview .....	82
Context.....	84
Time .....	84
Place .....	84
Culture.....	85
Situation .....	85
Data Sources and Preparation .....	93
Interviews.....	93
Documents .....	96
Course Communications.....	97
Interview Notes.....	98
Challenges with Simultaneity .....	100
Data Analysis .....	101
Intensive Coding .....	101
Writing Memos .....	104
Theoretical Sampling .....	108

Theoretical Saturation.....	114
Reflexivity.....	115
Power .....	116
Trustworthiness and Limitations.....	118
Establishing Trustworthiness and Integrity .....	118
Limitations .....	121
Other Ethical Considerations .....	124
Summary of Methods.....	125
CHAPTER FOUR: ENGAGING IN LEARNING TOGETHER.....	127
Theoretical Overview of Engaging in Learning Together .....	127
Push Starting Learning.....	129
Using Structure for Support .....	130
Taking Charge.....	134
Rising to Expectations .....	137
Doing the Work.....	141
Opening Up to Learning .....	142
Getting into Reading and Writing.....	144
Making It Real .....	150
Experiencing Political Processes for Self .....	151
Personalizing Learning .....	157
CHAPTER FIVE: LEARNING ONLINE TOGETHER AND LEARNING DEEPLY .....	164
Learning Online Together.....	164
Committing as a Team to Learning .....	165

Creating a Climate for Learning .....	168
Getting a System Down .....	172
Interacting with Instructor.....	179
Learning through Peers' Wisdom .....	183
Learning Deeply.....	192
Recognizing Achievements .....	193
Seeing Areas for Growth or Action .....	195
Finding Personal Enjoyment in Learning .....	196
Contrasting to Learning by Checklist .....	197
CHAPTER SIX: BECOMING POLITICAL.....	200
Becoming Political.....	200
Recognizing Preconceptions about Politics and Nursing .....	201
Perceiving Political Processes Differently.....	208
Expanding Notions of Nursing .....	211
Recognizing Politics Is Part of Nursing.....	214
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	218
Summary.....	218
Study Conclusions .....	219
Engaging in Learning Together .....	220
Strengthening Habits of Learning.....	222
Promoting Professional Formation through Civic Engagement Education..	226
Strengths and Limitations .....	230
Strengths .....	230

Limitations .....	230
Implications and Significance.....	233
Significance for Nursing Education.....	238
Future Research .....	241
Concluding Remarks.....	242
REFERENCES .....	245
APPENDIX A.....	275
Nurs 420 Policy, Power and Voice.....	275
APPENDIX B.....	277
NURS 420 Course Calendar (Spring 2011).....	277
APPENDIX C.....	280
Getting the Most Out of Class .....	280
APPENDIX D.....	284
Faculty Essay .....	284
APPENDIX E.....	290
Class Participation Evaluation Rubric—ONLINE Version.....	290
APPENDIX F.....	293
Post-Course Interview (PCI) Guide.....	293
APPENDIX G.....	296
Memo: Reliability - Coding and Data Analysis.....	296
APPENDIX H.....	300
Synergy of Learning on DB.....	300

APPENDIX I .....	303
Schema Used for Early Theoretical Coding .....	303
APPENDIX J .....	307
Engaging in Learning Together Conditional Relationship Guide .....	307
APPENDIX K.....	311
Verification E-Mail (Member Check) .....	311
APPENDIX L .....	313
Final Engaging in Learning Together Coding Schema.....	313

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Participants and Non-Participants’ Demographics and Course Information .....	91
Table 3.2	Interview Note, Casey.....	99
Table 3.3	Initial Line by Line Coding Example. ....	102
Table 3.4	Memo, Casey: Knowing versus Internalizing, 7/8/11. ....	103
Table 3.5	Portion of Early Memo on Interview Impressions.....	105
Table 3.6	Portion of Memo Showing Comparing and Questioning. ....	106
Table 3.7	Portion of Data Display for Making it Real: Connecting Current Issues to Learning. ....	107
Table 3.8	Example of Re-coding Transcript for Theoretical Sampling.....	109
Table 3.9	Participant Verification Responses. ....	111
Table 3.10	Data Display of Course Communication Analysis. ....	113
Table 4.1	How Advocacy Paper Aided Participants’ Learning.....	149
Table 5.1	Participant Perceptions of Instructor Interaction and Learning. ....	180
Table 5.2	Instructor Practices which Strengthened Participants’ DB Learning. ....	181
Table 5.3	Examples of Participants’ Satisfying Learning Activities .....	197
Table 5.2	Expanding Notions of Nursing. ....	212
Table 5.3	Recognizing Politics is Part of Nursing.....	215
Table H.1	Synergy of Learning on DB.....	301
Table I.1	Schema used for Early Theoretical Coding .....	304

Table J.1	Engaging in Learning Together Conditional Relationship Guide, 9/6/11.....	308
Table L.1	Final Engaging in Learning Together Coding Schema.....	314

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Model of Civic Engagement in Nursing Discipline.....	78
Figure 3.1	Early Graphic Depiction of Engaging in Learning Together.....	108
Figure 4.1	Visual Depiction of Engaging in Learning Together.....	128
Figure 4.2	Visual of Integrative Learning Process of Making it Real .....	151
Figure 5.1	Learning Online Together Graphic Organizer .....	165
Figure 5.2	Schematic of Discussing Ideas Together on DB.....	185
Figure 5.3	Learning Deeply versus Learning by Checklist.....	193
Figure 5.4	Participant Recognition of Learning Achievements .....	194
Figure 5.1	Participants' Political Interest and Activity .....	204



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Nursing has always been influenced by power and politics. Policy decisions impacting health and nursing are made by those in power in private and public organizations and government at all levels. Throughout the history of nursing, there has been a sustained call for nurses to participate in political and policy processes as part of nursing practice (Ashley, 1976; Lewenson, 2012; Roberts & Group, 1995). With the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010), nurses, now more than ever, have opportunities and responsibilities to contribute to health reform implementation and promote the health of citizens in the United States (US) (O’Neil, 2009; Ridenour & Trautman, 2009). Health care and nursing are political, and nurses need to be at policy decision-making tables or they and their interests in health and health care will certainly, as the saying goes, be on the menu. Graduate education in nursing prepares nurses for policy roles but this education is inconsistently provided in baccalaureate nursing programs. Little is known about what political and policy education is taught or how students learn these concepts and skills in undergraduate nursing education.

Social determinants of health are the “societal conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age” (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011, p. 2). These root conditions for health are dependent not only on individuals’ personal behaviors but also on policy decisions made by corporate, organizational, and governmental systems. The context for fostering healthy lives is dependent on decisions made by influential

individuals and groups in communities, states, and nations worldwide. These decisions and policies are impacted by the surrounding milieu of social, cultural, environmental, economic, and political forces. Nurses who seek to effectively promote health and decrease health inequities for their patients and populations they serve are challenged when circumstances beyond personal, individual controls play major roles in creating conditions for health and illness. For nurses and health professionals to help shape these decisions, sophisticated skills of civic engagement, which include political advocacy, are demanded.

One of the purposes of higher education in the US is to educate students for lives of personal and civic responsibility, to equip them with skills enabling their participation in conversations and decision making to solve social problems and contribute to the betterment of society (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Jacoby, 2009; Sullivan, 2000). Not only are students to be educated in the skills required for participatory citizenship, but the aims of universities, colleges, and programs emphasizing civic engagement are to increase students' awareness of societal needs and nurture desires to build better lives for themselves individually and the good of society collectively. Nurses, too, need education that develops the skills, knowledge, and dispositions for civic engagement, including political and policy advocacy at both undergraduate and graduate levels of education.

Political and policy education is currently a required part of graduate study in nursing, and policy skills are expected outcomes in both master's and doctoral programs. Standards for nursing graduate education and accreditation of those programs specify essentials that include being politically active to promote health, using policy-making

knowledge, skills, and processes to promote change and policy leadership for quality health care, and to meet the needs of the profession (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2006, 2011). Master's graduates focus on gaining knowledge and facility using public policy processes to affect change. Doctoral graduates provide policy and political advocacy leadership in organizational, local, state, national, and international political arenas.

There is growing recognition in the nursing profession and literature that political processes and policy education are also necessary for baccalaureate-level nursing practice (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010; Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010; Reutter & Williamson, 2000). Only about thirteen percent of nurses go on for graduate degrees (Institute of Medicine, 2011), however, nurses of all education levels are called to participate in health reform decisions and processes as both citizens and professionals (Reutter & Eastlick Kushner, 2010). Policy determines how resources are allocated, and resource decisions are made through political processes (Mason, Leavitt, & Chaffee, 2012). In every health setting, nurses and their patients are influenced by policies within those organizations as well as by societal policies generally. Nurses need education for civic engagement and political advocacy beginning in their undergraduate professional education and continuing through all levels of advanced nursing education (Boswell, Cannon, & Miller, 2005; Gehrke, 2008; Harrington, Crider, Benner, & Malone, 2005; Reutter & Duncan, 2002). However, participation in political and policy change processes is not naturally seen as part of domain of nursing, and nurses require education and practice if they are to successfully advocate for their patients (Maryland & Gonzalez, 2012; Murphy, Canales, Norton, & DeFilippis, 2005).

Historical documentation of nursing's political advocacy involvement is well-described from Florence Nightingale to the present in nursing literature (Harrington et al., 2005; Roberts & Group, 1995; Selanders & Crane, 2012). There is abundant literature calling for nurses to participate in political and policy processes, identifying the disciplinary and ethical obligations to participate (Bekemeier & Butterfield, 2005; Spenceley, Reutter, & Allen, 2006), and identifying how nurses can participate in policy making and political arenas, particularly in public policy processes (Mason et al., 2012; Ridenour & Trautman, 2009). While there is much literature describing *why* nurses should participate as political advocates (Boswell et al., 2005; Cohen et al., 1996; Falk Rafael, 2005) and practical guidance as to *how* nurses can participate in political advocacy processes (Des Jardin, 2001; Mason et al., 2012; Milstead, 2007), there is less literature and research on how nursing students actually *learn* to be political or use policy skills in their advocacy roles. Despite a history of nurse activism and recognition of the need for political concepts in graduate nursing programs, nursing education has been slow to recognize and teach political advocacy to undergraduate nurses early in their nursing education.

Professional standards for undergraduate nursing education specifically identify the need for professional nurses to ensure quality and use of evidence-based practices to provide effective, efficient care for the individuals, groups, and populations they serve. Essential V, number eleven in *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice*, reads "Participate as a nursing professional in political processes and grassroots legislative efforts to influence healthcare policy" (AACN, 2008a, p. 21). In fact, all of the essentials require political knowledge and skills to

accomplish the standards. For instance, Essential II addresses leadership and requires students to learn about teamwork, negotiation, and systems change processes. Essential VII focuses on population health, social justice, and eliminating health disparities. However, to do these things, professional nurses prepared at the undergraduate level require education about political and policy making processes. They need to learn how to become influential participants in community, organizational, and public processes where decisions impacting health are being made.

### **My Journey as a Political Nurse Educator**

I am a nurse educator who believes politics is part of everything we do in nursing, and that it is important for students and nurses to examine their political beliefs and values as evolving citizens and members of a discipline. If one accepts a definition of politics as the process of decision making surrounding resource allocations (Mason et al., 2012), then politics is constantly involved in nursing as decisions are made about practice including who is served, how services are provided, where they are delivered, who pays, who benefits, who is excluded, etc. When politics is interpreted broadly, politics and political processes are everywhere—in team processes, private organizations, for-profit and nonprofit agencies, and governmental and legislative entities at local, state, national, and international levels.

As a nurse educator of 25 years teaching primarily public health nursing, I also have been concerned with a general trend seen over time in nursing students in my program. Some students, though not all, arrived in senior year courses and increasingly questioned why nurses should advocate for patients if their personal values clashed with their interpretation of patients' value systems. Examples included being unwilling to

provide care for patients who made end-of-life decisions different from their personal views, talking negatively about patients on Medicare, Medicaid, the Women, Infants, & Children [WIC], or other health programs, being unwilling to educate patients about vaccines, and generally, espousing values and political views that were largely unexamined and often unsupported by solid evidence.

When teaching public health, I also saw this resistance and expression of personal values in how some students viewed populations and health issues in communities. They entered the course with negative views of people with low incomes or from various cultural or ethnic groups, expressing stereotypes about those who may not fit their view of “what’s right.” The resistance and trends I saw seemed increased in tandem with the vociferousness and polarization of political parties and extreme views routinely presented in the media.

Over time, changes in student and university values about higher education have also been apparent. An ethic of *instrumental individualism* has come to dominate in higher education, increasing an emphasis on the individual student’s goal of personal attainment and accomplishment (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). This ethic is compatible with seeing education as a consumer good and a means to an end—that of acquiring a job. The dominance of this ethic has led to a narrowed view for higher education by some schools and policy makers, promoting the growth of universities oriented to students as consumers, producing courses and programs that promise students their degrees by the shortest routes. When education is viewed through a consumer lens, students seem increasingly free to specify what they will “purchase” and to express views when goods do not meet with their standard of approval. This may conflict, however, with nursing’s

social and ethical responsibility to serve all and work for health (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2001, 2010). These ethical codes for practice mean nurses and students need to critically examine their views and values, work to be open to patients' needs, culture, and lifestyles, and to examine legitimate evidence about health, illness, research, and nursing interventions rather than to blindly accept generally and widely stated views about people, health practices, and interventions.

Some years ago, I was a member of a university task force participating in the American Democracy Project (n.d). Through that work, I learned of national efforts to increase college students' ethic and skills of participatory citizenship in our democracy. After exploring this literature and listening to my nursing students more carefully, I realized many had little knowledge of how democracy works and what their personal and professional roles as citizens could be. Sullivan and Rosin (2008) and Zlotkowski (2000) identified the importance of disciplinary learning through the lenses of political and civic engagement. Zlotkowski and Williams (2003) further elaborated on the faculty role in supporting college students' political learning within the context of the professions.

As a result of these new insights, in 1998 I re-designed an existing nursing professional issues course with the goal of increasing undergraduate nursing students' political knowledge, skills, and dispositions through an examination of current health and nursing issues. Through the course titled *Power, Policy and Voice*, students learned how to more effectively give voice to their concerns about nursing and health issues within a framework of nursing's ethic of political advocacy and civic engagement.

Constructivist pedagogies of engagement such as Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003), online learning communities (Rovai, 2007), and Kuh's (2001, 2003)

principles for engaging students in learning were used to design a course that actively engaged students with peers, the instructor and community as they learned. Over the years I taught the course, I became more aware not only of most students' lack of interest in political processes or policy making but their limited knowledge of how those processes work and the avenues for participatory citizenship in their organizations, communities and government.

Over time, I began to see positive trends in students' pre- and post-course knowledge and skills and qualitative statements about nursing's role in political advocacy and policy making. When it was time to do my dissertation research, it seemed appropriate to examine whether a change actually occurred and if so, what happened in the process of students' learning in the course. Though I was a teacher with years of experience, teacher research was new to me. Practitioner research focused on students' learning was important (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005; Zeichner, 2005). Without understanding how nursing students learned about political advocacy and hearing from those who experienced this learning process, I would not truly know if my teaching interventions facilitated or hindered this process. Entering the disciplinary conversation about nursing students' civic engagement and learning was important not only for my scholarly development but for advancing these ideas in the profession (Martin, 2012; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

### **Study Integrity and Legitimacy**

During the proposal stage of this research, I remember a time when I talked to two colleagues from nursing who asked what I was going to study for my dissertation. I told them my focus, examining how students' learned in my class, and our conversation



ended. As I turned to return to my office, I overheard one say to the other, “I would never have been allowed to study my own students for my dissertation.” This comment worried me for a long time, even after my committee approved my study. On my Chair’s advice, I wrote about this and discovered my concerns revolved around integrity, trustworthiness, and legitimacy.

### What Kind of Research Counts?

Will my research be considered legitimate, “real” research? Would my colleagues and discipline see it as worthwhile, as research that would count for something? These were questions I mulled while reflecting on the hallway conversation of my colleagues. There is tension in my discipline, as in others in higher education, over what kind of research counts. Some of this is bound up in quantitative versus qualitative debates (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). What counts is also embedded in current societal contexts and decisions that include policy makers and funders favoring quantitative designs and researchers. The commodification of higher education rewards those who bring in funding (Gumport, 2000; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004). Nursing elevates clinical research with patients. Nursing educational leaders call for generalizable multi-site, multi-method studies (National League for Nursing [NLN], 2005). How will I fit as a new qualitative researcher-teacher and will my work count for anything in this context?

Then, I had to ask myself—count for what? As a nurse educator and faculty member, promotion and tenure issues are real and the results of my work must be evident to members of those committees and administrators. The time and energy demands of research became real for me as I did this study. These external responsibilities and

accountabilities, however, are not the most important reasons for doing this research. This research counts because it benefits my students, their learning, and me as a teacher and it just might help other nurse educators think deeply about their students' learning and their own teaching.

I am morally obligated to my students as their teacher to know what comes as a result of our interactions. The principle of nonmaleficence “do no harm” is well known in nursing as is beneficence that says “do good” (ANA, n.d.). To teach only within a framework of not doing harm, maintaining the status quo, perhaps does nothing toward promoting the good in teaching and learning. Teaching with beneficence in sight is what happens when one does research within the scholarship of teaching and learning. Who better to deeply examine what happens in learning and teaching than students and teachers? Zeichner (2005), in fact, sees research as a “basic requirement for learning to be a teacher educator” (p. 122). Substitute “nursing” for “teacher” and his idea is the same: rigorous study of teaching and learning with one’s students adds depth and insight not found any other way, which contributes to knowledge production about what does and does not work in education (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

### **Significance of This Research for Nursing**

There are many potentially positive outcomes related to increasing undergraduate nursing students' civic engagement, specifically political and policy advocacy, during their nursing education. These cluster in the areas of aiding in formative professional growth; increasing their knowledge, skills, and dispositions for civic and political work; and strengthening their habits of learning overall.

I believe education about political ideas, participation in policy making, and connecting that learning directly to nursing practice will help students become more self-aware of their own values and beliefs and facilitate participation in change processes that promote health for all. Inherent in this education process is exposing students to relevant, legitimate sources of information about political ideas and health policy, using nursing, health evidence and information as a basis for forming recommendations and decisions, learning how political processes work, increasing communication skills for involvement in policy processes, and presenting ideas for change. By educating future nurses in these areas, their awareness and ability to be active participants in change processes will improve. Having this information early in their nursing careers may help normalize a view of nursing that is engaged in political decision making for health at all levels (organizational and governmental levels)—a view of nursing that is active rather than passive, acting rather than acted upon, and bringing nursing’s perspectives to policy decisions.

Many disciplines are actively involved in policy decisions. The educational processes of those disciplines overtly promote that their graduates bring ideas to policy tables and work to influence decisions (Pace & Flowers, 2012). Democracy is based on the belief that all citizens work to participate in and influence decisions for the good of all (Colby, 2006; Colby et al., 2003). Educating nurses within their baccalaureate education helps to level the playing field, promoting democratic involvement in decision making as a basic tenet of practice for nurses as professionals and citizens. It promotes more reasoned participation in political processes and the deliberate use of the nurse’s

professional self in decisions impacting health in addition to and often far from the individual patient's bedside.

Other nurse educators have expressed similar views about undergraduate and graduate nursing students' political education. There is strong justification for nursing education to include skills of political advocacy and policy making in educational curricula in both undergraduate and graduate education (Boswell et al., 2005; Falk Rafael, 2005; Reutter & Eastlick Kushner, 2010; Smith, 2007). Specific frameworks and conceptual models have been developed to guide nursing political and policy practices (Milio, 2002; Russell & Fawcett, 2005) and stages of nursing's political development (Cohen et al., 1996).

There is descriptive wisdom of practice information shared about specific teaching strategies and experiences used by faculty in undergraduate courses. Some faculty developed and taught political process and policy making in public/community health or health promotion courses (Byrd, Costello, Shelton, Thomas & Petrarca, 2004; Callahan, 2000; Reutter & Williamson, 2000). Others taught stand-alone policy courses (Faulk & Ternus, 2004; O'Brien-Larivée, 2011) or developed internships (Magnussen, Itano, & McGuckin, 2005).

Only a few studies were located that documented research about undergraduate nursing students' political experiences and learning (Reimer Kirkham, Van Hofwegen, & Hoe Harwood, 2005; Olsan et al., 2003). Rains Warner and Barton-Kriese (2001) did a qualitative, exploratory study that compared undergraduate nursing and political science students' journeys to become politically competent, revealing differences in their values and perception of politics and political activism. Nursing students lacked understanding

of the value and use of political processes in nursing and resisted seeing political activism as part of the nursing role.

This dissertation contributes to addressing this gap in the literature and details the results of a study of students' learning in one undergraduate nursing policy course. The purpose of this study was to learn how undergraduate nursing students made sense of civic engagement processes like political advocacy and policy making in *NURS 420 Policy, Power & Voice*, a senior-level required course in our nursing curriculum. A substantive theory of learning, *Engaging in Learning Together*, emerged, which has the potential, in similar contexts, for guiding nurse educators' curricular decisions, course design, and teaching strategies when teaching policy making and political advocacy to undergraduate nursing students.

The study was guided by two overarching questions. 1) How do undergraduate nursing students, in one online blended course, make sense of civic engagement processes like policy making and political advocacy, which are often seen as unrelated to nursing? 2) During this online blended course, how do these students progress in integrating these civic engagement processes into their views of nursing? Specific sub-questions were:

- 1) How does involvement with other students and the teacher influence learning these concepts and skills?
- 2) What course activities facilitate or constrain making sense of these civic engagement processes in nursing?
- 3) How do students' views of themselves as political actors change as they progress through the course?

4) What pivotal turning points or transformational moments may occur in the course of students' learning?

By researching how students understood course concepts and incorporated this into their evolving understanding of nursing, I saw them broaden their views of the nursing profession, envision themselves as political and policy actors, and begin to embrace nursing's active involvement in political and policy processes for the good of the profession, their patients, and health care. Teaching and learning this knowledge and skills effectively in undergraduate nursing programs should lead to more use of these skills earlier in their roles as licensed professionals in nursing practice.

In summary, Chapter One introduces the relevance of civic engagement and political advocacy for nurses' successful practice in their communities. My own journey and rationale for studying undergraduates' political and policy learning is presented along with the research questions guiding this research and its potential significance for nursing education.

Chapter Two presents civic engagement literature in higher education and nursing education. Pedagogies for fostering student-centered learning in blended online environments are described. The theoretical foundations for this study are identified.

Study methodology is detailed in Chapter Three. The context for study is summarized with specifics of data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapters Four through Six present my findings. The emergent theory grounded in data is presented with supporting evidence.

Chapter Seven presents the discussion of study findings. This includes the specific relevance and significance of the study for nursing and nursing education.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important in research to situate a study in the perspectives that influence the topic. Influential perspectives from literature on civic engagement in higher education, nursing education, and pedagogies of engagement for student learning impacted this study. The salient points of each area follow as they pertain to nursing undergraduates' political and policy learning in a blended online course.

### **Civic Engagement in Higher Education and Nursing Education**

Over the past twenty years, research has identified higher education's significant contribution to the development of undergraduate students' dispositions, abilities, and skills of civic engagement and participation in democratic processes (Colby, 2006; Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Galston, 2007; Jacoby, 2009; Sullivan, 2000). Research shows learning these skills in college does make a difference (Denson, Vogelgesang, & Saenz, 2005; Colby et al., 2003, Jacoby, 2009). College students participate in civic skills like policy making, voting, volunteering, and making communities better places to live at higher levels during college and after graduation than those who have high school graduation or less (Lopez & Elrod, 2006; Lopez & Kiesa, 2009; Spiezio, 2002). There is evidence that discipline-specific education and learning can positively impact civic learning by connecting disciplinary learning with relevant civic and political learning (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008; Zlotkowski, 2000; Zlotkowski & Williams, 2003).



College students do not automatically know the concepts of citizenship and advocacy. They do not understand the structures, processes, and entry points for citizens and professionals to participate in democratic processes, either in government or organizational systems (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; National Conference on Citizenship [NCC], 2006, 2009). Lopez and Elrod (2006) reported on students' civic engagement by undergraduate majors in college and identified health sciences students, in which nursing was included, to be about in the middle for political practices of voting and volunteering when compared to students in all other majors. Students in health sciences were on the lowest end of engagement when specifically looking at activities of political voice such as attending political meetings.

### Civic Engagement Defined

“We have a fundamental task to renew our role as agents of our democracy” (“Presidents’ Declaration,” 1999, p. 1). Education leaders and researchers have worked in the past decade to integrate civic engagement into programs, curricula, and co-curricular activities in university and college life (Campus Compact, 2002; Colby, 2006; Ehrlich, 2000a; “Presidents’ Declaration,” 1999). What then, is meant by civic engagement? Thomas Ehrlich, a scholar, researcher, and former higher education administrator defined civic engagement as:

...working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes. (2000a, p. vi)

Musil (2009) added important recognition of empowerment through civic engagement:

civic engagement is acting on a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities that encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence, participation in building a civil society, and empowering individuals as agents of positive social change to promote social justice locally and globally. (p. 58-59)

Colby et al. (2003) identified four spheres for civic learning: Personal Integrity, Social Conscience, Civic Involvement, and Political Engagement. Within the Personal Integrity sphere, the goal is to see oneself as a member of a larger society. Learning the traits of accountability, personal responsibility, integrity, and honesty are part of this sphere. Developing willingness to work as a member of a community and seeing beyond oneself with compassionate concern are goals in the Social Conscience sphere. The Civic Involvement sphere includes gaining understanding of assets, problems, diversity, and differences within communities in addition to learning how to work collectively with others. The sphere of Political Engagement includes learning how to be an influential leader using democratic processes, participating in policymaking and advocacy, and performing traditional and non-traditional political activities. This sphere involves the cultivation of leadership skills, including knowledge of political and social systems, problem-solving skills, and nuanced communication abilities along with development of the traits of understanding, deep respect, and sensitivity. Teaching to promote civic engagement within these four spheres contributes to increasing knowledge of democratic structures and processes and promotes students' desires and abilities to work together as citizens to improve life in their communities, states, nations, and world (Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Jacoby, 2009; Sullivan, 2000).

## **An Overview of Civic Engagement in Higher Education**

Historically, higher education has promoted students' preparation for participation in a democracy (Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Galston, 2007) and contribution to the public good (Boyer, 1996; Ramaley, 2009) as central to its missions and goals. In recent years, Americans' civic-mindedness and participation in democratic processes by citizens in general and young people has been the focus of intense attention and action. Civic scholars, researchers, and educators from K-12 through higher education systems have examined causes, consequences, and interventions for declines in civic engagement in the US. Interrelated factors have focused attention on higher education and its role in preparing students to be civically engaged including: declining participation of Americans in civic life (Keeter et al., 2002; National Conference on Citizenship [NCC], 2006, 2009; Putnam, 1995), increasing societal emphasis on individualism (Ehrlich, 2000a; Sullivan, 2000), rising calls for accountability from higher education by stakeholders (Gibson, 2006; Holland, 2005; Tufts University & Campus Compact, 2006), and changing patterns of diversity and globalization (Brennan, 2008; Gumpert, 2000). Focused efforts to increase college students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills of civic engagement have been underway.

### Factors Influencing Civic Engagement Education in Higher Education

#### Declining Civic Participation in America

Americans have reduced participation in processes that demonstrate commitment to maintaining a democracy. Putnam's (1995) study of social capital, trust, and civic connectedness showed Americans' participation in civic associations has declined dramatically despite rising levels of education. The National Conference on Citizenship's

(NCC) *Civic Health Index* is a national yearly survey of Americans' civic lives and activities (2006). The 2006 report showed a 30-year decline on 40 indicators of civic health, including decreased connection to family, friends, religious attendance, and civic groups; less knowledge about civic structures and processes; decreased time spent reading newspapers and learning about issues; and generally decreased trust levels in other people and social institutions. Not all was bleak: some indicators were up. Americans, especially young people, volunteered at increased rates, people expressed more political views, and generally, had more confidence in their knowledge about government structure and process. Despite these areas of gain, political and civic involvement was shallower overall. Though confident in estimating their political knowledge, survey respondents could not name Congressional representatives or candidates in their own districts. Volunteering occurred as an alternative to political participation with lack of connection or action aimed at the larger societal issues causing the need for the volunteering in the first place.

The 2009 *Civic Health Index* (NCC, 2009) showed 72% of Americans further decreased time spent volunteering, working with civic groups, or participating in political activities. During the economic recession, Americans focused inward, concentrating on themselves, jobs, or the lack thereof, and family or relatives needing food and/or shelter. Americans' trust in social institutions was low with banks and major corporations, formerly ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> highest, viewed at 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> (of 11 total). Small businesses, the scientific community, organized religion, and education were most trusted, in that order.

A bright spot for civic engagement is use of the internet and social media as avenues for citizens' access to civic and political information. Many Americans, especially young people, use blogs and other sites for political and community information as their primary sources of news and communication with others about issues (Levine, 2008). The 2008 presidential election demonstrated, by the Obama campaign in particular, the use of social media and the internet in unprecedented, effective ways to attract young people to political messages and garner their votes (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE], 2008).

### Young People and Civic Participation

Decreased civic involvement by Americans generally is mirrored in young people's behaviors, but is more pronounced. This pattern is illustrated by declining emphasis in civic knowledge in K-12 public schools via (Galston, 2004a) low scores on national tests of civic knowledge by high school students (Galston, 2004a; Goodlad, Soder, & McDaniel, 2008), and general lack of interest in politics by young people (NCC, 2006; 2009). Only 30% of young people in 2000 thought it important to know about current political and societal issues compared to 60% of young folks who thought it important in the mid-1960's (Galston, 2007). Young people tended not to see politics as a means to solve society's problems and were turned off by divisiveness (Ehrlich, 2000b). There are, however, both concerns and areas for hope in young people's civic involvement.

For the past 10-15 years, young adults have volunteered in their communities in large numbers. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys US college freshman annually, and of those who entered college in 2005, over 70% reported

volunteering weekly during their senior years in high school (HERI, 2005). Campus Compact, a national organization promoting service-learning and volunteer service by young adults, reported college students in 1190 colleges gave 282 million hours of service to communities at an estimated economic cost of \$5.7 billion during the 2007-2008 academic year (Campus Compact, 2009). A significant increase in volunteering nationally by young people occurred after 9/11 and stayed steady until the recent recession (NCC, 2006). Since the recession, volunteering dropped somewhat in all age groups as Americans have dealt with the effects of job losses and the economy (Marcelo, 2007; NCC, 2009).

Sustained volunteerism by young people provides hopeful evidence they want to make a difference in their communities and society. Some sources say volunteering is done as an alternative to politics (Galston, 2007; Kiesa et al., 2007; NCC, 2006, 2009). The type of volunteer tasks done by students did not involve explicit political action or emphasis (Marcelo, 2007; Spiezio, 2002). Often, they did not make connections between volunteer services they performed and larger issues that created the need for the service itself (Galston, 2007; Spiezio, 2002). In fact, a criticism of volunteering through service-learning is the historically apolitical nature of the service and learning (Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Fritschler & Smith, 2009; Galston, 2007; Jacoby, 2009; Smith & Fritschler, 2009; Spiezio, 2009).

Another indicator of weak civic engagement in young people is lack of knowledge about government and its structures and processes (Kiesa et al., 2007; Spiezio, 2002). In addition, there are unequal opportunities to learn about civic involvement, receive education (CIRCLE, 2010), and differences in student learning

related to educational institutions' emphasis and presentation of civic education (Lopez & Elrod, 2006; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005).

Of note in civic research is the difference between college-educated young people and those who have not attended college. On almost all measures of civic participation, those who attended college score higher (Denson et al., 2005; Colby et al., 2003; Jacoby, 2009). Education is a persistent, strong predictor of activities such as contributing to causes, voting, attending meetings, and writing letters. Though indicators for Americans and young people overall are decreased, for those with less education, there are fewer opportunities to learn about civic participation and less involvement in civic and political processes (CIRCLE, 2010; NCC, 2009). An area for optimism about civic involvement is education makes a difference.

#### Increasing Emphasis on the Individual

In the 1960's, almost 60% of college students identified development of a "meaningful philosophy of life" (Galston, 2007, p. 628) as most important compared to 40% who said becoming "financially well off" was most important. This contrasted with a reversal in these two goals in 2000 when 42% felt it was important to develop a meaningful philosophy of life and 73% said becoming financially well off was most important. How college students answered this question illustrated the ethic of instrumental individualism that has permeated our society (Sullivan, 2000). In this ethic, achievement of individual goals, competition, control, and power are dominant themes in a market-driven, capitalistic society. Education's worth is emphasized through its market value and characterized by increased specialization and isolation in the professions

(Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Galston, 2007; Jacoby, 2009; Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

Sullivan (2000) criticized higher education saying its failure to make the larger purposes of higher education apparent to communities and students has resulted in college students adopting the values and practices they see in faculty and university communities. These values support a market-driven society emphasizing individualistic thinking, practices, and values and de-emphasizing appreciation and consideration of the common good.

Most universities have values either inherent or explicitly defined in their missions or honor codes. Values commonly delineated in these include honesty, truth-seeking, freedom, respect for others, tolerance of differences, willingness to be open-minded, to listen, have concern for others, and to contribute to one's community. In higher education institutions where civic education is emphasized, these values are explicitly addressed in courses, programs, administrative processes, and campus activities. They are inherent in faculty activities in research, teaching, and service (Colby et al., 2003).

Providing civic education for college students is consistent with the history and goals of liberal education (Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). The original goals of public education prepared students to participate in processes of democracy (Ehrlich, 2000a; Galston, 2007). Deborah Meier, scholar and principal of a public school, wrote about democratic pedagogy and an environment that fostered "habits of mind" necessary for citizens in a democracy to make their way in a complicated society and world (1995, p. 50). John Dewey spoke to the value of students learning



about democratic processes and activities in settings that were themselves democratic (Dewey, 1916/2002), and Meier stated “We cannot pass on to a new generation that which we do not possess!” (1995, p. 146).

The ethic of instrumental individualism has created strong professions and educated graduates who have made better lives for themselves. However, this ethic has also led to an environment emphasizing individual achievement at the expense of other important outcomes of higher education. Civic education is a means to renew higher education’s focus to prepare educated citizens and foster students’ values of societal and community responsibility.

#### Public Accountability for Higher Education

Universities, disciplines, and programs are expected to provide evidence to communities, governing, advisory, and funding bodies that they provide quality education for students. A “trickle down” effect of *No Child Left Behind* federal education legislation was to increase public accountability in education, including higher education. As students and families increasingly bear college cost burdens due to reduced governmental support for higher education, they demand to be treated like consumers expecting flexibility, choice, and accessibility. Universities are accountable for quality with outcomes like student retention and degree completion as primary outcome measures of achievement (Lingenfelter, 2004).

Instrumental individualism is further promoted by universities when their primary worth is defined in terms of economic impacts. Putting an economic value on higher education’s outputs is not in itself negative, however, many other outputs of higher education such as promoting students’ sense of integrity and moral growth, fostering a

commitment to the good of communities and society in general, promotion of justice and concern for others, and developing a love for education itself have not been well-explicated or receive less media exposure and emphasis (Sullivan, 2000; Ehrlich, 2000a). For-profit higher education institutions advertise widely and heavily via television and the internet. Their marketing links education with successful careers, financial stability, and upward mobility. Direct appeals to future students specifically emphasize convenience, access, and educational programs without “the fluff” contributing to the consumerization of higher education (Browne, 2001). To compete, all colleges and universities have had to examine their offerings, often resulting in programs with convenience, access, and flexibility as drivers of curriculum.

Many voices have explicitly called on higher education to re-examine its historical mission to contribute to the good of society through the education of students and direct outputs of universities to communities (Mathews, 2000; Smith & Fritschler, 2009). Responding to this changed environment and accountability, higher education is seeking ways to demonstrate its value to students, communities, and society, and civic engagement can be a mechanism to show contributions to the public good (Gumport, 2000).

### Changing Patterns of Diversity and Globalization

Significant shifts in racial and ethnic diversity are occurring worldwide (Brennan, 2008; Gumport, 2000; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Stakeholders in higher education include diverse populations that are local, regional, national, and international in scope. Not only are there more voices and audiences to serve, but higher education must address these populations simultaneously in a 24/7 world. Increased numbers of

students with differing cultures and educational backgrounds speaking diverse languages increase the complexity of offering classes, programs, and services. Nationally, women access higher education at rates surpassing men. Immigration has shifted US demographic patterns as well as increased the need for civic knowledge and participatory skills (Galston, 2004b). Without attention to civic education in higher education, inequities in citizen participation could lead to policy decisions on many levels that may be undesirable or unjust (Galston, 2004b).

Voting patterns in the 2008 presidential election illustrated how changing patterns of diversity impacted society. The most diverse electorate in US history voted with a quarter of the total votes cast by black, Latino, and Asian voters (Lopez & Taylor, 2009). Black eligible voters turned out in greater percentages, 65.2% in 2008 compared with 60.3% in 2004. Black females had the greatest voter turnout rate of all racial, ethnic, and gender groups at 68.8%, up from 63.7% in 2004. The youngest voters were more racially and ethnically diverse than older voters (Keeter, Horowitz, & Tyson, 2008).

While voting is an important political activity and indicator of civic involvement, it is one of many. Other activities such as working on political campaigns, taking interest in politics generally, having political efficacy, and working with others on political issues are also important civic events. Studies suggest members of minority groups may have fewer opportunities to participate in civic activities throughout childhood and young adulthood (CIRCLE, 2010). While women do participate in civic activities like volunteering, data suggest gender differences exist with women having less political knowledge and activity than men (Jenkins, 2005; Portney, Eichenberg, & Niemi, 2009). Higher education institutions may impact students' skills differently. Historically black

colleges' and universities' graduates have higher rates of participation in certain activities, like attending political meetings (Lopez & Elrod, 2006).

Junn (2004) criticized civic education as often taught to reinforce a dominant hegemonic system by improving access for those who already benefit and not improving access for those who are least heard and most marginalized by existing structures and processes. She suggested teaching civic education from a stance that explicitly acknowledges the realities of multiple perspectives and differing conceptions of “the good democratic citizen” (2004, p. 3).

### Why Educate for Civic Engagement in Higher Education?

#### Education Impacts Civic Involvement

Evidence suggests education is associated with increased civic practices (Jarvis, Montoya, & Mulvoy, 2005; Keeter et al., 2008; Lopez & Elrod, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2008). Early experiences in political processes help shape young people's future practices. Young adults whose parents were interested in, talked about, and provided opportunities for political and civic experiences are more civically and politically engaged throughout their lives. Educational level, socioeconomic status, and minority status all impact one's level of civic engagement (CIRCLE, 2010). Those with less education, income, and from minorities consistently show less engagement on measures of civic health (Lawry, Laurison, & VanAntwerpen, 2006) and show increases when provided opportunities to learn about and participate in civic activities (Levine, 2008).

Students educated about civic engagement in college show gains in knowledge and demonstrate increased participation in civic activities during college (Campus Compact, 2009; Kiesa et al., 2007; Spiezio, Baker, & Boland, 2005). Lopez and Elrod

(2006) studied civic engagement in college graduates from 2000. The “Baccalaureate and Beyond 2000/2001” survey focused on three measures: Volunteering, defined as a measure of civic participation; Voting, defined as a measure of electoral participation; and Attending Political Meetings and/or Writing Opinion Letters, defined as a measure of political voice. All ethnic groups showed increased rates of engagement with African American, American Indian, and Alaska Natives showing the highest rates on all measures. There were differences in engagement levels related to the size of the university with those from smaller universities demonstrating slightly greater engagement. Volunteering and Voting levels were significantly greater than Attending Meetings and/or Writing Letters across all students, again showing the greatest levels in college graduates from small, private institutions. Consistently, when college students are compared to students without college education, college students’ civic practices are better on almost all measures of civic involvement (Lawry et al., 2006). Though these studies should not be taken to mean that college education *causes* increased civic behavior, the relationships are substantial.

A longitudinal HERI national study by Vogelgesang and Astin (2005) reported on civic engagement behaviors by college students at three periods. A national sample of college students was surveyed as entering freshmen, as seniors, and six years post graduation for civic values, attitudes, and activities at each time period. Though volunteering decreased from pre- to post-college, it persisted at higher levels when compared with levels of those who did not attend college. Post-graduation volunteerism was seen as “helping others” rather than “changing society” (para. 8). Differences between men’s and women’s civic activities existed with men more often working with

political groups or contacting policymakers on political issues, and women more often volunteering or “buycotting” (preferential consumerism based on company values) (para. 8). Women less often identified their activities as political in intent or nature. There were differences in respondents’ activities related to institutions with students from private colleges and universities more likely to work for societal change compared to public university respondents. Those who graduated from public universities were more likely to have voted in elections.

Kiesa et al. (2007) studied college student political engagement by interviewing Millennial Generation students from 12 four-year US campuses (n=386). Volunteering was done as a way to directly work on social issues with others. Participation in formal politics was viewed as complex, competitive, confrontational, and polarized, making processes difficult to understand and decreasing their willingness to participate. Respondents were easily overloaded with news and uncertain how to decide what information to trust. They wanted to participate in public and political processes but did not have opportunities or knowledge about how to do this. Respondents enjoyed the non-confrontational, open-minded, focus group survey process and said they would like political learning processes in college to be similar to the survey process.

Institutional opportunities for students to learn about political engagement varied with some campuses providing intentional, frequent opportunities and others providing fewer opportunities (Campus Compact, 2009; Kiesa et al., 2007; Lopez & Elrod, 2006). One study examined civic activities of vocational students in community colleges compared to those from for-profit proprietary colleges (Persell & Wenglinsky, 2004). When graduates from these types of schools were compared four years after graduation

on three measures of civic activity, students from for-profit schools were less likely to vote, participate in other political activities, or become involved in their communities (n=4056). Research is in progress to further clarify institutional differences and impacts.

This information shows education about civic engagement during college is important and contributes to graduates' civic engagement practices beyond graduation. Students do not automatically become civically engaged, and all students do not have equal opportunities in their lives or colleges to experience civic education.

#### Disciplines and Civic Engagement

There is reason to believe disciplinary emphasis in civic engagement helps make education more relevant to students and assists them in focusing on interests central to the profession and communities served by them (Wood, 2008; Zlotkowski, 2000; Zlotkowski & Williams, 2003; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Information about disciplinary majors is reported in some national studies on college students and civic engagement, though reports usually identify these collectively as "health sciences" rather than specifically as "nursing" (Denson et al., 2005; Misa, Anderson, & Yamamura, 2005). An interesting feature in Lopez and Elrod's study (2006) was the examination of levels of civic engagement by college majors. In their study, math, engineering, or computer science graduates demonstrated the lowest overall rates of civic engagement. Students who were law, public administration, planning, or humanities graduates had the highest rates of engagement on the studied activities. Health sciences majors were in the middle with 43% reporting volunteering, 76% reporting voting in the 2000 election, 25% reporting having written an opinion letter, and 13% having attended a political meeting.

A drawback of this and many civic engagement surveys is the use of self-report data and lack of historical data by majors for comparison.

This information about civic engagement, higher education, and college students is relevant for nursing students and their education. Increasing nursing's presence and expertise in civic processes like policy advocacy and politics (Boswell et al., 2005; Cohen et al, 1996; Milio, 2002; Roberts & Group, 1995; Russell & Fawcett, 2005) requires instruction in civic engagement processes in college. Undergraduate nursing students specifically could benefit from this type of education while in their nursing programs (Brown, 2011; Carnegie & Kiger, 2009; Falk Rafael, 2005; Gehrke, 2008) and in the enactment of their personal and professional citizenship lives after college.

### **Brief History of Civic Engagement in Nursing**

Nursing in the US has always had a strong commitment to health in communities and society. That commitment was mostly community-based in nursing's early days. Nurses' roles and duties took them into people's homes, schools, workplaces, and to sites in cities, towns, and rural areas (Roberts & Group, 1995). In the early 1900's, practice changes by hospitals, physicians, nurses, and nursing education redefined nurses' roles, shifting the largest practice arena for nurses to hospitals, where it has stayed to the current time (Reutter & Duncan, 2002). Approximately 62% of nurses work in hospital settings, 33% in community settings like public health, school health, and home health, and slightly over 5% in long-term care (Health Resources & Services Administration [HRSA], 2010).

Nursing truly does have a compact with society to promote health, and nursing education must prepare students for this charge. Nursing professionals need civic



engagement skills, knowledge, and dispositions to work collaboratively with communities, solve problems, and increase the health of society (Gehrke, 2008; Spenceley et al., 2006). Some tension exists, though, in accomplishing this. Students entering nursing frequently “just want to get a job” and may not be interested in the learning experiences and broader responsibilities associated with participatory citizenship and societal obligations (Boswell et al., 2005; Reutter & Duncan, 2002). Students and faculty may also see civic education as conflicting with time for clinical education for traditional nursing roles of illness care in hospitals (Murphy et al., 2005). As in all of higher education, accountability for nursing education has heightened, and pass rates for nursing’s licensure board examination are used nationally as the key indicator of student learning and success. A response to “consumer” voices of students, employers, and policy makers has resulted in many distance and accelerated options for students pursuing nursing education (AACN, 2012). Many forces influence nurses’ practice environments and employment settings, including those affecting higher education described previously.

Literature well-documents nursing’s obligation to participate in political and policy making on behalf of patients, populations, and the profession and provides advice on how to participate. The next section provides context for nursing education and current practices of civic engagement learning. First, influential forces impacting civic engagement in nursing education are described. Second, literature on civic learning in graduate and undergraduate nursing students is reviewed. Third, the rationale for civic education in undergraduate nursing education is presented.

## Forces Impacting Civic Engagement in Nursing Education

### Nurses Called to Political Advocacy

Nurses' social and ethical contract with society obligates nurses to be civically and politically engaged in communities and organizations. The ANA *Code of Ethics* (2001) and *Nursing's Social Policy Statement* (2010) identify nurses' obligation to participate in changing the health care system and promote achievement of good health for all. Ballou's (2000) analysis of these documents affirmed nursing's obligation for sociopolitical practice, identifying a mismatch between the political knowledge, skills, and practice of elite, highly educated nurses and nurses practicing "hands on" nursing. She called for further study into how staff nurses view advocacy and for nursing education to prepare all nurses for sociopolitical work.

Current issues in society such as global violence, disaster response, health care reform, and an aging US population illustrate how the "states of humanity and health" (Rains Warner & Misener, 2009, p. 93) are impacted by nurses. Transformation of the quality and safety of the US health system was the focus of a 2010 Institute of Medicine [IOM] report promoting that all nurses be educated as leaders and policy workers. Nurses are called to advocate for health reform (Murphy et al., 2005; Ridenour & Trautman, 2009), participate in public policy arenas (Maryland & Gonzalez, 2012), speak out for disciplinary policy needs (Matthews, 2012), and be a voice for vulnerable populations and health needs globally (Benton, 2012). They are also urged to advocate for workplace and organizational policy changes for patients and the profession (Dingel-Stewart & LaCoste, 2004; Mason, Costello-Nickitas, Scanlan, & Magnuson, 1991).

Falk Rafael (2005) and Reutter and Eastlick Kushner (2010) argued for nurses to promote healthy public policy aimed at decreasing health inequities in society. Both were critical of the profession's silence in advocating for policies to promote health for vulnerable populations. Smith (2007) also reminded nursing to live up to its history and obligation as a caring profession by working to decrease health disparities. She criticized nursing for being so preoccupied with increasing its status professionally that it has ignored its primary mandate to advocate for oppressed groups. These authors identified political advocacy and policy action as necessary to accomplish this work, and nursing education in both undergraduate and graduate education as essential for providing the foundation.

#### Emphasis on Individualistic Professional Education

Nurse educators have experienced changes in nursing education and students in recent years. Some have identified changes in students' motives for pursuing nursing such as those who entered nursing because job and financial prospects were good versus those who entered nursing as a vocation or calling (Rains Warner & Misener, 2009; Wellman, 2009). Educators have encountered incidents of student-student and faculty-student uncivil behavior (Clark, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Information in nursing education literature shows nursing students work, have families, are older than typical college students, and have multiple responsibilities that make involvement in civic processes challenging (Cramer, 2002; Wellman, 2009). In addition to this, a severe nursing faculty shortage is impacting every aspect of nursing education including how it is delivered (AACN, 2008b).

Nursing education can be accomplished through a variety of programs including those that prepare students with diplomas, associate, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees. In addition, there are multiple paths to degrees, including accelerated programs for students with previous degrees and various programs that take students straight from associate's to master's degrees, or bachelor's to doctoral degrees. Nursing education uses distance and online education to provide access, convenience, and flexibility to pre-licensure students and Registered Nurses (RNs) who want to obtain advanced degrees while working (Rains Warner & Misener, 2009).

Nursing education is professional education that prepares nurses to take the national licensure examination (NCLEX). Historically, nursing curricula have been strongly shaped by the Tyler behavioral learning model (Tyler, 1949) and the medical model. In these curricula, compartmentalization by specialty (pediatrics, obstetrics, geriatrics, etc.) was used to organize blocks of content and clinical experiences as if human bodies and families were organized in chunks rather than as holistic beings experiencing a multiplicity of health events at any point in time (Boland, 2009; Trnobranski, 1997). Within these nursing curricula, *what* was taught was emphasized rather than focusing on *how* students learned or teachers taught (Dillard & Siktberg, 2009). Most nursing faculty teaching today learned in programs designed with this emphasis. In spite of a growing body of research on practices that improve achievement and learning (Benner et al., 2010; Diekelmann, 2002; Ironside & Valiga, 2006; Schell, 2006), there is evidence that nursing faculty teach much as they were taught, over-relying on lecture as a primary strategy and focusing on addition and deletion of content for

curriculum revision (Brown, Kirkpatrick, Greer, Matthias, & Swanson, 2009; National League for Nursing [NLN] Education Advisory Council [NEAC], 2006).

In a recent study sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Benner et al., 2010), researchers recommended that nursing programs needed to strengthen classroom teaching methods based on seeing the repeated over-use of traditional forms of instruction reliant on PowerPoint®, lecture, and fostering passive learning by students. This was a national, qualitative ethnographic study of nine schools of nursing chosen for their excellence, size, demographics, location, and characteristics of professional education. It was part of a larger study, the Preparation for the Professions Program, which investigated educational preparation in law, ministry, engineering, medicine, and nursing to identify best practices in programs and characteristics distinguishing professional education in higher education today (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). The passive nature of classroom-based teaching and learning in nursing education contrasted with the highly individualized, experiential teaching and learning nursing students experienced in clinical education (Benner et al., 2010).

Calls for nursing curricular reform have resounded for years. Tanner (1998) stated that even though nursing curricula were revised to be community-based and focused on disease prevention, content overload in programs “has reached crisis proportions” (p. 383) and further reform was needed to develop and test curricular models to stimulate inquiry, decision-making, critical thinking, and other learning processes. Because of concerns from Tanner and others (Diekelmann, 2002; Lindeman, 2000), the NLN made recommendations for improving and redesigning faculty practice, focusing nursing education administration on system improvement strategies, and specifying nursing

education research initiatives with transformation of nursing education as a primary goal for the new century (NLN, 2003, 2005).

Evidence collected from nursing programs and faculty has shown, while innovative change has happened in some programs, the desired scope of reform has not occurred nationally (NEAC, 2006), and some reform may be more superficial in nature than what is needed to serve society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and result in learning that increases "...creativity, risk taking, boundless curiosity..." (NLN, 2005, p. 57). In a 2005 survey of nursing faculty from NLN-accredited programs, all respondents (n = 219) described their curricula as content-laden and highly structured with measurable objectives. In addition, they described programs as highly inflexible and considered their primary teaching responsibility was to "cover the curriculum" (NEAC, 2006, p. 56). While there were acknowledged limitations in generalizability with this particular sample, it raised legitimate issues of concern about the limited progress that has been made.

#### Cultural Diversity and Civic Learning in Nursing

Nursing education is also impacted by an increasingly culturally diverse world. The nursing workforce remains female-gendered at a ratio of 15 female nurses for every male nurse, though for those who became nurses after 1990, the ratio is 10:1 (HRSA, 2010). Racially and ethnically, non-Hispanic white nurses make up about 83% of the workforce. Of nurses who graduated since 2005, 7.1% are Hispanic (compared to 1.4% who graduated in 1980 or earlier), 4.8% are Asian (compared to 5% who graduated in 1980 or earlier), and 7.4% are Blacks (compared to 4% who graduated in 1980 or earlier). Nurses need knowledge and experience working with diverse patients and populations in

all settings and communities (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Torres & Castillo, 2006). Nurse educators need new knowledge and skills to work with an increasingly culturally diverse student population (Stokes & Flowers, 2009). Political and civic skills of working with others, communicating respectfully and sensitively, and promoting policies for equitable health care are critical in our culturally diverse world (Murphy et al., 2005; Smith, 2007). Nursing students from diverse racial and ethnic groups may not have equal opportunities in their pre-college lives to learn and build political and civic knowledge and skills (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

#### Practicing Nurses' Use of Civic Engagement

A few studies about practicing nurses' roles in policy advocacy provided insight into political and policy concepts to be taught to students. Gebbie, Wakefield, and Kerfoot (2000) interviewed nurses (n=27) whose positions and roles included policy work for insight into their effectiveness. Results revealed these nurses had commitment, knowledge of people and their health needs, and extensive communication skills, which extended to politics and policy work. A few participants cited going to "activist" nursing schools or having experiences in public health or with nursing leaders as influential in their development. For most participants, nursing program political or policy experiences were largely at graduate level. Participants felt nursing programs needed to provide policy courses and internships that emphasized democratic processes in politics and policy change for all nursing students.

Rains Warner (2003) interviewed six "politically seasoned professional nurses" (p. 137) to describe their everyday, lived experiences of political competence in their nursing roles. Six themes of political competence arose: the value of nursing expertise,

importance of networking relationships, use of influential, persuasive communication, strength of collective commitment, having a “big picture” perspective, and being persistent. The author recommended nurses should examine the implications of everyday nursing practice for political and policy impacts and consider these six areas for developing political expertise.

Dollinger (2007) interviewed eleven Registered Nurses who worked in public policy positions in government or on committees. An important barrier to nurses’ political work was the lack of status and prestige they sensed and received from those in other disciplines. Widespread acceptance of the medical view of health and illness impacted the effectiveness of nurses’ policy efforts. Dollinger (2007) advised all nursing programs to prepare students for potential work in policy settings. In addition, she recommended strong preparation in the liberal arts to support students’ developing expertise in writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and working with people from diverse disciplinary perspectives and achieving greater educational parity.

Barrett-Sheridan (2009) studied 205 California nurses’ political activities and attitudes about patient advocacy at the societal, macro level. While she found self-reported voting levels to be high, other political participation was limited, with most nurses not viewing “bedside” patient advocacy as political in nature. She advocated more education on the political context of patient care early in nursing education programs. Buerhaus, Ulrich, Donelan, and DesRoches (2008) surveyed 3500 nurses as part of a national workforce study project and for the first time included questions about nurses’ political practices. Nurse respondents self-reported a 93% rate of voter registration and 86% intended to vote in the 2008 presidential election, which was higher than the general



public rate of 82% registered to vote. Despite high self-reported voting practices, these RNs reported low rates of participation in other political activities such as writing letters to editors on issues or working on campaigns. This is consistent with Barrett-Sheridan's (2009) and others' findings who identified that nurses may not automatically view nursing and politics as connected (Rains Warner, 2003) nor extend their personal or professional actions to political activities beyond voting.

Cohen et al. (1996) conceptualized a 4-stage framework of nursing's political development. The four stages were *buy-in*, *self-interest*, *political sophistication*, and *leading the way*. The authors described the profession's progress at each stage identifying action needed to develop nurses' political potential, which included providing stand alone policy content in educational programs, though not specifying whether this meant graduate education or all nursing education.

A small amount of literature and research on volunteerism and nursing provides another view of nurses' civic activities. Results indicated nurses who volunteered did so because they wanted to make a difference in someone's life, however, they did not usually view their volunteerism as political or as a way to address underlying social issues or problems (Fothergill, Palumbo, Rambur, Reinier, & McIntosh, 2005; McDowell, 2002; Mill, 2006; Sorensen, 2005; Wilson, Lester, & Simson, 2000). A qualitative study by Riley and Beal (2010) described 36 nurses' public service contributions and the meaning of service to the participants. Participants were nurses who had achieved the highest rank on their institution's clinical ladder or received a clinical practice excellence award. Volunteer experiences were categorized as social justice advocacy, or serving as a clinical or community knowledge expert. All participants saw

their public service volunteerism as having a positive reciprocal effect—they gave to their communities and in turn developed enhanced clinical practice and professional identities. Participants noted both personal and professional satisfaction from their service experiences. Riley and Beal (2010) noted no participants had educational experiences in their basic nursing education in which they had content or experiences that contributed to developing a professional identity of public service.

While studies about nurses' political and civic activity are still few, these studies showed some trends in nurses' political and civic practices with greater participation in voting and volunteering but less practice of other overtly political activities. Nurses in positions requiring political expertise identified particular knowledge and skills required in political practice. There was a consistent recognition of lack of educational preparation and call for nursing education to prepare nurses for civic engagement, specifically for participation in political and policy processes.

### Civic Learning Practices in Nursing Education

#### Nursing Education, Service-Learning, and Civic Engagement

Nursing education was an early adopter of service-learning. Service-learning is a pedagogy of experiential learning and reflection that links students' academic study to community settings, issues, and groups. Research in nursing education demonstrated the effectiveness of service-learning in helping students to learn about concepts related to political and policy advocacy, such as community needs, resources, and social issues (Bailey, Rinaldi Carpenter, & Harrington, 2002; Childs, Sepples, & Moody, 2003; Narsavage, Lindell, Chen, Savrin, & Duffy, 2002; Redman & Clark, 2002; Siefer & Connors, 2001). In addition, research showed students gained skills in teamwork,

collaboration, leadership, and partnership (Mueller & Billings, 2009). In one study of nursing students, a social justice framework was used to teach a service-learning course. Anecdotal description of the process identified an increase in students' abilities to take personal and professional responsibility for social issues and disparities (Redman & Clark, 2002).

One of the criticisms of service-learning in higher education generally has been the lack of specific inclusion of politics, policy, and civic engagement in conjunction with service-learning activities (Jacoby, 2009; Musil, 2003; Smith & Fritschler, 2009; Welch, 2009). As service-learning has developed in nursing, it was increasingly used to explicitly promote civic and political learning. Solomon Cohen and Milone-Nuzzo (2001) described how they used Cohen et al.'s (1996) stages of political development in nursing in conjunction with service-learning pedagogy to create and teach a 3-course sequence for graduate nursing students completing a major in health policy. This explicitly political service-learning emphasis was rated highly by students and faculty as empowering nurses for future policy work. The authors emphasized the necessity of students' learning basic political knowledge and skills before becoming adept at higher stages of Cohen et al.'s (1996) model.

Changes in pre- and immediate post-course civic engagement practices by undergraduate nursing students were demonstrated by Nokes, Nickitas, Keida, and Neville (2005). Undergraduate students in a qualitative study by Olsan et al. (2003) found their service-learning experience critical to development of their roles as nursing policy participants. O'Brien-Larivée (2011) used service-learning to facilitate students' learning about population health and policy interventions. After assessing a population's health

needs, students identified relevant potential policy interventions, wrote about these, and presented them to their peers, faculty, and community and members. These studies demonstrated how service-learning was used to successfully teach important concepts needed by students to promote political and policy learning. Intentional and deliberate use of service-learning pedagogy combined experiential service with reflection and theory to help nursing students integrate civic skills with nursing practice.

### Graduate Nursing Education and Civic Engagement

Education in political and policy skills is already required in graduate nursing education. Two studies reported pre- and post-course testing of graduate nursing students related to health policy courses in their programs. Rains and Carroll (2000) found students' self-perceptions of political competence (defined as skills, knowledge, context, and motivation) were significantly higher after taking a graduate level policy course. Primomo (2007) reported a significant change from pre- to post-course in graduate students' political astuteness as measured on the Political Astuteness Inventory (Clark, 1984). Her students reported moving from being "slightly aware" to "beginning level of political astuteness" and qualitatively reported increased knowledge of political processes and political advocacy.

Three reports of experiences in graduate policy courses with detailed descriptions of course concepts and learning experiences were identified. Reutter and Duncan (2002) used a critical approach in teaching graduate students about healthy public policy and advocacy. The course included a practicum whereby students worked with preceptors to apply concepts and be mentored in policy processes. Manning and Grosso (2011) related how a live, Capitol Hill political advocacy experience enlivened an online course in one

doctoral program. Details of the course, preparation for the Capitol experience, and visit logistics were described. Students' and faculty reflections highlighted the importance of knowing how to present issues briefly and cogently, recognizing impacts in representatives' states and districts, and not limiting information solely to impacts on nursing. All three articles conveyed the importance of experiential learning in helping students learn to apply political and policy concepts within a nursing context.

Milio (2002) developed "a model of policymaking for teaching, research and strategic action" (p. 10) based on the author's case study research and literature. The model depicted the sociopolitical policy environment, processes, and impacts and has been used to teach nursing policy to students in health disciplines. Milio (2002) structured course activities based on real health issues, collaborative group discussions, presentation of students' policy projects, and shared students' evaluative comments reflecting satisfaction with the experience.

The *Conceptual Model for Nursing and Health Policy* (Fawcett & Russell, 2001; Russell & Fawcett, 2005) was designed to guide nursing's use of health policy knowledge. It depicted the metaparadigm concepts of humans, health, and environment linked to nursing's policy focus within four levels, moving from individuals through subsystems, geopolitical health systems, and finally globally to humankind. The model specified the focus and outcomes of nursing health policy work and has been used to support nurses' policy research and doctoral curricula in policy studies in nursing.

#### Undergraduate Nursing Education and Civic Engagement

Though political and policy knowledge is listed as required content in standards for professional nursing practice for baccalaureate graduates, there is little written

literature about how these concepts are taught in undergraduate programs (AACN, 2008a). Research on undergraduate nursing students and their civic engagement is in its infancy. One dissertation was located in which senior baccalaureate nursing students' civic engagement activities were studied. Brown (2011) surveyed 256 students in the last semester of their programs from 44 US schools of nursing to determine the types of civic and political activities in which they participated. Civic engagement was defined as including three types of activities: civic activities (volunteering in/belonging to organizations), political activities (voting, working on campaigns, etc.), and public voice activities (sending email about issues, using social media, boycott or boycott products or corporations, signing petitions, etc.). Nursing students self-reported higher rates of civic and public voice activities but had little political activity. Political knowledge was lacking with only 12% of respondents answering three political questions correctly. There was a definite preference for volunteering over doing political activities. These results were consistent with national surveys of young adults' civic engagement (Dalton, 2006; Kiesa et al., 2007; Portney et al., 2009). Brown's (2011) study also revealed respondents' perceived lack of preparation and mentoring for political and policy activities in their nursing education. Even when courses focused on health issues, policy and/or political processes, fewer than half of respondents felt those courses made them more likely to engage in political activities. Because the study focused on students' civic practices and not on students' learning in courses, there was no data to further explain what or how concepts were taught or learned in those courses.

There is also little research about undergraduate students' experiences learning about civic engagement and policy advocacy. One study, which qualitatively compared

political science and nursing students' political attitudes and activities, suggested nursing students tended *not* to view their actions as political and to avoid actions that may be viewed as such (Rains Warner & Barton-Kriese, 2001). Nursing students were more likely to see politics as something done by others and as a barrier to doing the "real" work of nursing. These views co-existed with nursing students' positive practices and views of volunteerism. Rains Warner (2003) recommended students would benefit from exploration of personal and professional citizenship obligations and roles. She promoted teaching a view of policy and political processes as empowering mechanisms for change.

There are several descriptive accounts of specific courses, political concepts, and policy-making processes used in teaching undergraduates. This practice wisdom supports teaching political, policy, and civic engagement within a disciplinary context. In some programs, political and policy concepts were taught in conjunction with community and/or public health nursing courses (Byrd et al., 2004; Reutter & Williamson, 2000). Healthy public policy and population-focused practice require political and policy knowledge and skills in order to influence social, economic, political, and legal impacts on health. Activities such as writing letters to editors or politicians; having guests from media, advocacy groups, and/or politicians; developing policy resolutions; and presenting issues orally were examples of activities promoted by these authors. Another program integrated political concepts across multiple courses. Callahan (2000) detailed how a political action framework was used in a baccalaureate program to teach students how to influence health promotion in any setting as nurses. Through exploratory questions in the framework, students analyzed selected health issues during courses and developed plans of action, which included implementing a political action. Student evaluations revealed

they had little or no political knowledge prior to courses and after course experiences felt more comfortable participating in future political action.

In other programs, political and policy making processes were taught through undergraduate elective experiences rather than in the regular curriculum (Magnussen et al., 2005; Taylor, 1995). Gaining practical experience was the focus of a legislative internship in a program in Hawaii (Magnussen et al., 2005). While these authors reported positive student evaluations of the experiences, each mentioned difficulties in gaining enrollment and/or continuing funding. Faulk and Ternus (2004) described their experience of teaching an online elective course with goals of increasing students' political knowledge for leadership and solving problems. The course was designed for active learning through nine course modules on topics such as legislative processes, health care delivery and financing, legal/ethical issues, policy making, and nursing's role in influencing policy. Online discussions with peers and instructors, use of readings and online resources, quizzes, and course projects provided engaged learning opportunities. Positive student evaluations revealed changes in students' views of political processes and nursing's potential to impact change. The authors believed providing choices for students to develop personally relevant interests and building an "action step" for students to connect nursing and policy actions were especially important in this course.

#### Summary of Civic Engagement in Nursing

In summary, nursing education is in the early stages of focusing on knowing how to develop nursing students' civic participation and knowledge. Graduate level nursing education requires policy education and is beginning to show graduates' abilities to use policy actions to support health and nursing needs. Despite recommendations for



undergraduates to have knowledge and skills of political processes and policy making, there is less knowledge about the amount, type, or consistency of this education in undergraduate nursing. There was no research identified documenting how undergraduate students learn about political and policy processes. Undergraduate nursing students do not seem to have strong civic knowledge or understanding of political practices, structures, and processes and do not have equal chances for civic education or experiences in their pre-college or nursing education. Nurses want to make a difference and contribute to the societal good and need specific educational experiences to learn civic skills and involvement. Civic education emphasizing political and policy advocacy for undergraduate nursing students can strengthen future nurses' political abilities as professionals and promote civically engaged nurse citizenship. These are further elaborated on in the following section.

### Why Educate for Civic Engagement in Nursing?

There are many potentially positive outcomes related to increasing nursing students' civic engagement during their nursing education. These cluster in the areas of aiding in formative professional growth; increasing their knowledge, skills, and dispositions for civic and political work; and strengthening their habits of learning overall.

#### Strengthening Formative Professional Growth

Educating nursing students to become civically engaged has the potential to empower graduates to work for a healthier and better society from the outset of their nursing careers. College is one of the most meaningful times in students' lives, and

evidence demonstrating that students are more civically and politically active after college if they have experiences while in college is growing (Jacoby, 2009; Lawry et al., 2006). Nurses have a social responsibility to aid populations and society to become healthier, and educating students in their formative nursing education is an empowering way to establish civic engagement as an avenue for accomplishing this charge. Experiential pedagogies for teaching civic education and engagement, like service-learning (SL), are already widely used in nursing. Classroom-based pedagogies for engagement have the potential to energize students' learning about real issues and connect societal issues about health and illness more directly to theoretical and ethical learning in nursing (Benner et al., 2010).

In the Benner et al. (2010) study, professional *formation* was identified as essential for nursing students' transformation to being a nurse. Formation is similar to socialization; however, it is not just teaching students to *act* like nurses but instead to *think* like nurses. The formation of nursing students' dispositions to *think and act* like nurses results not only from experiential learning done in clinical work but in every experience during nursing education, including classrooms. The use of real-world issues and problems and pedagogies of engagement should facilitate nursing students' abilities to not only examine real health and illness issues but to grapple with those issues with peers, listen, explore solutions, pose imaginative "what if's," and to work back and forth, in a hermeneutic cycle, from issues in context, to theory, practice, and back again through the cycle (Bruner, 1996; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). Through learning processes like this, students will gain opportunities to develop and internalize professional ethics and thinking that embraces health and illness as not only pertinent within the walls of

institutions like hospitals, but as part of the fabric of life as a whole with community and societal implications.

### Increasing Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Civic and Political Work

In nursing and nursing education, there is continual tension between a narrow view of nursing focused on individual patients who are ill and require in-patient, bedside care and a broader view of nursing that includes community and population-focused nursing with nurses acting in many spheres, including public arenas of policy-making. This tension persists despite calls in the literature for nursing participation at broader levels (Benner et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 1996; Falk Rafael, 2005; IOM, 2010) and results in competition for emphasis and space in curricula.

Why is it important for students to experience learning about civic engagement and political advocacy? Nursing has a social contract to make society a healthier and better place to live (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2001, 2010). *Health* is the “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1946, para. 1). The building blocks or determinants for health (WHO, 2011) are supported when there is clean air and water, places to walk and bike, wild spaces for contemplation and beauty, safe neighborhoods, adequate homes for shelter, and nutritious food to eat. Society must provide environments and education for people to know love, security, freedom, challenge, worth, sharing, peace, and health. Capable, informed nurses are needed to participate in critical, complex conversations to make society healthier.

The call for nurses and rationale for nursing students to be more civically and politically engaged is undeniable (Abood, 2007; Benner et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 1996;

Davies, 2004; Des Jardin, 2001; Gehrke, 2008; Mason et al., 2012; Reutter & Duncan, 2002; Spenceley et al., 2006). Spenceley et al. (2006) identified the problem, often repeated in the literature, of nurses' invisibility at policy tables and speculated as to why this has remained problematic. The authors suggested nurses' lack of opportunities to discuss policy issues and alternatives, limited discourse with other disciplinary members and stakeholders in policy issues, and lack of knowledge for framing policy issues effectively as areas interfering with nurses' abilities to participate effectively in policy arenas. In addition, civic engagement research suggests nursing students lack critical interest and knowledge in politics and policy. This could potentially be addressed by civic education in *both* undergraduate and graduate nursing programs.

Benner et al. (2010) and others (AACN, 2008a, 2011; IOM, 2010) specifically recommended increasing nurses' abilities to participate in policy processes and political work in organizations and society. Creating more opportunities for undergraduate nursing students to learn to influence change and policy is crucial for formation of professionals' knowledge and courage to act and advocate. Experiences built into classroom and clinical learning can be transformative in aiding students' sense of efficacy to impact real, complex issues and problems.

### Strengthening Habits of Learning

From the time of Thomas Jefferson, educating students for lives of personal and social responsibility and engagement in our democracy has been a mission of education (Musil, 2009). However, when college students were asked to rank the purposes of education and were shown items such as tolerance, respect, cultural awareness, and preparation for citizenship, they ranked these at the bottom of the list. At the top of the

list was education as the means to individually succeed in life (Humphreys & Davenport, 2005 cited in Musil, 2009). In recent years, higher education has begun to re-claim and renew the historical emphasis of these larger purposes of education. Nursing education benefits from this because our profession requires students to learn and exhibit understanding and respect for others, consider cultural differences, develop open-mindedness, and appreciate diversity. The skills of civic participation—teamwork, flexible written and oral communication, reasoning, knowledge of political structures and processes, to name a few—are necessary for skillful and effective nursing practice.

Those who have worked to increase college and university students' civic engagement the past 20 years are seeing positive changes (Lopez & Kiesa, 2009; Musil, 2009). The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified four essential learning outcomes for college and university students. These include:

- 1) Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world;
- 2) Intellectual and practical skills;
- 3) Personal and social responsibility; and
- 4) Integrative and applied learning. (Musil, 2009, p.51)

Within these four areas, there is increased emphasis on teamwork, intercultural knowledge and competency, ethical and practical reasoning, and local and global civic engagement. The successful accomplishment of these outcomes is dependent on classroom and real-world learning experiences that require students' to learn with each other, as well as individually.

Teaching for increased civic engagement by nursing students has the potential to deepen students' learning, re-engage them as active learners, and re-focus nursing education in the classroom on student learning (Hermann, 2004). The pedagogies of

learning for civic education foster active involvement of students in their learning. Some of these pedagogies include: collaborative inquiry, experiential learning, service-learning, project-based learning, and integrative learning (Schneider, 2000). These pedagogies help facilitate the formation of practical reasoning (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008), a special form of thinking in the professions that requires “strong and generative connections between scholarly and applied knowledge” (Schneider, 2000, p. 113). The use of these pedagogies is consistent with recommendations made for transforming nursing education by Benner et al. (2010). Most of these pedagogies have strong evidential, research-based support. Pedagogies of engagement appropriate to support civic engagement teaching and learning are presented in the next section of this chapter.

### **Pedagogies of Engagement for Civic Learning**

“An education for civic engagement should be as intellectually sophisticated as any other pedagogical tradition. It should be about instilling habits of mind that will prepare students to analyze and wrestle with problems of a public character as well as of private interest throughout their lives” (Scobey, 2009 as cited in Lawry, 2009, p. 8).

If nurses are obligated to use political and civic skills to practice nursing effectively, and this education is required in undergraduate standards for education, how might this be accomplished to facilitate student learning, particularly in online, blended settings such as the Nursing 420 course (referred to hereafter as NURS 420)? What is a “good educational journey” in nursing students’ civic learning (Henderson & Kesson, 2004, p. 4)?

### What Is Engagement in Civic Learning?

*A good journey* in civic learning requires engaging students in what they are learning. This is explored in this section of this chapter. First, engagement in civic learning is described. Second, pedagogies of engagement and their common characteristics are presented with evidence from selected literature. Third, online and blended online education and pedagogies of engagement are highlighted. Fourth, specific civic learning pedagogies for higher education and nursing education are illustrated. The intent is not an exhaustive literature review of these pedagogies and concepts but a presentation of ideas as theoretical foundation for the support, discussion, and significance of this study's findings.

### Student Engagement and Engaged Learning

*Engaged learning* and *student engagement* are terms used in higher education with implications for civic learning. Engagement in learning “is both an end and a means” (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2003, p. 4). It is an important predictor *and* outcome of students' learning in higher education (Shulman, 2002). Engagement is based on the idea that “the more students study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it” (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006, p. 2). The evidence on engagement comes from hundreds of studies done about how college students learn and effective practices of faculty, students, and institutions related to learning (Carini et al., 2006; Kuh, 2001, 2003; Pascarella, 2001). Chickering and Gamson (1987, 1991) and other researchers identified a number of factors that increased student engagement in learning. These included the use of active learning strategies, faculty-student contact, having high expectations, getting feedback promptly, spending time on learning tasks,

learning with others, and respect for diversity. The more students engage in their learning, the more likely they will develop the “habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development” (Carini et al., 2006, p. 2). These principles for engaged learning should also foster engagement in civic learning.

How well higher education institutions and, subsequently, their faculty foster student learning, as measured by these student engagement factors, is the foundation for a national survey that identifies quality practices in higher education and provides ways for institutions of higher education to compare progress to similar institutions. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of colleges and universities done annually to assess indicators of student learning in US higher education institutions and to provide information to institutions and the public (Kuh, 2001, 2003; NSSE, 2003, 2009). From this research, five “benchmarks of effective educational practice” (NSSE, 2009, p. 10) emerged: academic level of challenge; use of active, collaborative learning; amount of student-faculty interaction; enriching educational experiences; and supportive campus environment (p. 10). Each of these benchmarks has specific activities associated with them that were identified through research. *Academic challenge* level includes items such as preparation time for class, working harder than expected, having assignments emphasizing application, synthesis and/or evaluation to problems and new situations, and number of written reports and readings expected for class. *Use of active, collaborative learning* includes discussion of ideas with peers and/or people both in and outside of class and working with others within and outside of class on projects. *Student-faculty interaction* includes behaviors such as receiving prompt feedback, discussing course ideas both within and outside of class, and discussing grades, assignments, or career plans



with faculty. Having *enriching educational experiences* were things like having serious discussion with students holding different ethical, religious, or political beliefs or values and using technology to complete discussions and/or assignments. *Supportive campus environment* included supporting academic success by providing resources and promoting quality relationships with students and faculty.

Popkess and McDaniel (2011) reported on a secondary analysis of undergraduate nursing students' learning engagement compared with two student groups: education majors and pre-professional health science majors who participated in the 2003 NSSE. Nursing and pre-professional health science students had significantly lower scores on active and collaborative learning. They spent less time than education majors working with others to learn both in and out of class, participating in discussions while in class, and made fewer presentations. At the same time, nursing majors felt they studied much longer and harder than education majors. The authors concluded that students may have been from nursing programs that used fewer active learning strategies in delivering curricula and suggested working hard to learn may not have been the same as engaging to learn deeply. The benchmarks from the NSSE and factors to increase engaged learning contributed to the design of NURS 420 and pedagogical and instructional decisions for students' civic learning in the course.

### Pedagogies of Engagement for Civic Learning

Pedagogies of engagement is a phrase referring to a host of learning theories and approaches used to teach students about political and civic engagement (Ehrlich, 2000a; Colby et al., 2003; Jacoby, 2009; Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). Both Russ Edgerton (cited in Smith et al., 2005) and Thomas Ehrlich (1998) used "*pedagogies*

*of engagement*” originally to refer to democratic, active learning principles, collaborative learning, and service-learning (SL) as means to teach students in classrooms and communities about civic processes (p. 494). These three pedagogies are commonly included in most descriptions of active, engaged learning today, and are cited as bedrock pedagogies for civically engaged learning (Ehrlich, 2000a; Colby et al., 2003; Jacoby, 2009; Smith et al., 2005). Ehrlich (1998) presented the use of democratic learning processes, students’ active involvement in learning, and discussion with others about relevant problems in communities and society as central to civic learning. Ehrlich also envisioned these pedagogies of learning could be enhanced using technology.

Sullivan and Rosin (2008) described pedagogies of engagement as educational theories and learning environments constructed to aid students to engage the world as professionals. Their interpretation of this term specifically linked these pedagogies to the disciplinary formation of professionals during their education, stressing the importance of moral learning in addition to learning knowledge and skills of being a professional in any discipline.

The term “pedagogies of engagement” has come to be used in pedagogical literature to refer not only to pedagogies of civic engagement but to all pedagogies that enhance students’ learning engagement. Most of these pedagogies are based on constructivist learning philosophy (Innes, 2004), which is learner centered and characterized by the view that learners construct what they know through meaningful dialogue with others rather than passively receiving transmitted knowledge. Because learners must create their understandings and make them relevant personally,

constructivism espouses principles that include fostering active and lively engagement with ideas, each other, the faculty, and authentic issues and problems in communities.

Many learning theories and frameworks can be pedagogies of engagement for civic learning--some are specific to civic learning such as the Civic Learning Spiral (Musil, 2009) and others, such as Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003), are well-researched pedagogies that foster engaged student learning. While pedagogies of engagement can be enacted in many ways, characteristics common to all in civic learning include: emphasis on student learning rather than on teachers' teaching; moral dimensions of learning; active student participation; connection to real world, authentic experiences; and involvement with others in learning.

### Commonalities of Pedagogies of Engagement

#### Emphasis on Student Learning

Students' learning rather than teachers' instruction is the focus. The teacher as seat of wisdom and power is de-centered in the classroom, and students' learning is paramount. The central question for faculty is "how can I assist students to reach this goal?" rather than "how can I cover this content?" Democratic pedagogy puts students and their learning in the forefront of curricular design and actions requiring teachers to enact a democratic philosophy of curriculum wisdom when engaging with students (Henderson & Kesson, 2004). Henderson and Kesson advocated use of "the 5C's of wise curriculum judgments: collaboration, caring, character, challenge, and calling" (p. 12). *Collaboration* means using diversity purposefully and meaningfully for inquiry and action. *Caring* is characterized by fostering educational growth through genuine, respectful, and synergistic engagement that emphasizes possibilities. *Character* requires

constant “soul-searching honesty” (p. 13) to examine one’s moral wisdom as a teacher in democratic principles of openness, diversity, multiplicity, courage, justice, and difference. *Challenge* is recognition that democratic wisdom is an ideal requiring both knowing and not knowing. Democratic wisdom is viewed as a *Calling* where passion and positive energy enliven and transform teaching and learning experiences. Teachers who strive to develop and enact these 5C’s in their teaching and curricular work foster a philosophy and climate for democratic pedagogy. Engaging with students and their learning processes from this philosophic base is a natural fit for focusing on student learning and teaching civic engagement.

Spiezio (2009) described democratic pedagogy based on theoretical ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill who said individuals who participate in democratic processes will develop empathy for others and efficacy in collaboration and negotiation (Pateman, 1970, as cited in Spiezio, 2009). The use of this pedagogy at eight universities to provide civic education in general education courses developed students’ qualities and skills necessary for engaged citizenship (Spiezio, 2009). Intentional use of democratic principles to distribute power in classrooms and courses were used to teach not only course concepts but participatory skills of democracy. Responsibility for learning was shared; decision making about course assignments, processes, and norms did not rest solely with the instructor. These skills were practiced in classrooms, universities, and communities. The authors recommended teaching civic engagement using similar pedagogies.

### Moral Dimensions of Learning

A significant dimension of learning how to be personally and socially responsible, a goal of civic learning, is moral development. Moral learning is complex and involves moral cognition, moral affect, and moral behavior (Swaner, 2005). A full explanation of these three areas is beyond the scope of this paper, however, Swaner believed moral education involved learning in several dimensions including frequent opportunities to encounter issues and dilemmas, to discuss and hear multiple perspectives, and to act and reflect on actions. Ehrlich (2000a) and Colby et al. (2003) identified moral education as essential to civic education and engagement. Colby et al. (2003) studied twelve universities and colleges providing civic education and identified that all twelve had strong, explicit moral codes, which formed a framework and foundation for learning civic participation and citizenship. Researchers also found, because students had internalized the institution's moral values, they were less likely to accept ideas "forced" on them and more likely to consider ideas and information using well-reasoned skepticism framed by their discipline and the moral framework of their college or university.

The moral enactment of nursing is a natural foundation for teaching civic engagement in nursing education. As a result of the Carnegie Preparation for the Professions study in which nursing was a part, Benner et al. (2010) advocated nurse educators teach for professional formation rather than role socialization. Socialization refers to sociocultural forces and influences and their impacts on a professional's role development, where formation goes beyond knowledge and influential impacts to the actual transformational process of taking in knowledge and contextual stimuli, using "skilled know-how" and becoming a professional (p. 165). It includes recognizing,

accepting, and enacting the moral obligations of the profession. Exploration of personal and professional values and their enactment within the profession requires intentional experiences for students to learn “ways of being and acting in the world” (p. 166).

Learning how to be civically engaged and to incorporate political and policy skills into one’s nursing identity requires more than learning skills. It requires intentional space and multiple opportunities for reflection of personal beliefs and professional obligations in dialogue with others.

Pedagogies of engagement such as inquiry-based learning (Liazos & Liss, 2009, Aug.), narrative pedagogy (Diekelmann, 2003), or critical pedagogies (Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994) provide avenues for students to surface and explore values surrounding political engagement. Many of these pedagogies are predicated on making systems of power, race, gender, oppression, difference, and the “-isms” apparent so they can be deconstructed, analyzed, and examined. Civic engagement education helps students learn and experience education as preparation for lives of social and moral responsibility (Colby et al., 2003; Ehrlich, 2000a). There is emphasis on the higher purposes of education that go beyond economic stability and individual achievement. These can aid nursing students’ professional formation in incorporating civic and political engagement into their nursing identities.

#### Active Student Participation in Learning

One nursing textbook definition of active participation in learning is “interaction with the content, course, classmates, and the teacher” (Halstead & Billings, 2009, p. 378). Chickering and Gamson (1991) describe active learning as that which requires students to “make what they learn part of themselves” (p. 66). Participating actively in learning is

often contrasted with more passive learning behaviors of listening to lectures, memorizing, and taking tests. Research shows students benefit from reading, writing, and talking about their learning with peers, teachers, family, and friends—virtually anyone involved in their learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Kuh, 2003). Active learning is supported by constructivist principles emphasizing co-creation of meaningful learning placed in context of learners' past, present, and future.

Gottlieb and Robinson (2006) and Vogelgesang (2009) identified civic engagement required higher order thinking and behaviors including knowledge, issue analysis, communication, listening, open-mindedness, persuasion, and seeing multiple perspectives. In addition, it required the ability to work with others, achieve consensus, manage conflict, and take appropriate action. It was crucial to develop motivation for civic participation. Gottlieb and Robinson listed these “essential civic competencies and skills” (2006, p. 22) in categories of intellectual, participatory, research, and persuasive skills. Classroom-based learning experiences as well as on- and off-campus activities outside class with peers and groups were important contributors to learning these higher order competencies.

Pedagogies promoting active learning have been associated with fostering deeper learning, particularly when they are intentionally designed to promote high level thinking. Deep learning occurs when learners show they understand and can apply knowledge to themselves and new situations in personally meaningful ways. How students learn is transformed and reproduced in many ways such as through writing, presenting, discussing, and more. It contrasts with surface-level learning involving memorizing and reiterating what was learned on tests with little transformation of new

knowledge (Gibbs, Lucas, & Spouse, 1997). Affective responses like enjoyment and satisfaction of learning have been linked to engagement and deeper learning (Bryson & Hand, 2007).

### Multiplicity and Diversity

John Dewey (1916/2002) conceived of citizen education as inherent in public education's mission. Citizenship required learning about the lives and experiences of fellow citizens and working together to make lives and communities better.

Postmodernist attention to multiple perspectives is the norm in pedagogies of engagement (Innes, 2004). Exploration of commonalities and differences is purposive. Learning goals go beyond tolerance to acceptance and celebration of difference as an expression of the fullness and richness of life. *Dialogos* is one inquiry process of democratic curriculum wisdom that directs teachers and students to explore and share multiple worldviews with the goal of greater understanding of the ways power and knowledge are privileged (Henderson & Kesson, 2004).

Multicultural experiences, communication, and collaboration enhance and strengthen civic engagement experiences (Gurin et al., 2002). Misa et al. (2005) used national longitudinal college cohort data to determine pre-college, curricular, and co-curricular experiences related to graduates' post-college civic and political engagement. Collegiate experiences that were significantly related to respondents' 6-year post-college civic and political engagement included having taken ethnic diversity courses, having interactions with racially diverse people, and cultural workshop attendance.



### Real World, Authentic Experiences

Engaged learning is promoted with student study and involvement in authentic issues and problems (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Meier, 1995; Schlechty, 2002). Engaged learning in the disciplines is promoted with not only theoretical thinking and knowledge but practical reasoning that requires the student's intellect be brought to bear on real problems in real communities in order to act (Shulman & Fenstermacher, 2008; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). Learning strategies like case studies, inquiry or problem-based learning, and collaborative ventures develop students' skills of listening, finding evidence, developing alternatives, negotiating, communicating persuasively, and teamwork (Lombardi, 2007). Situated learning (Innes, 2004) and service-learning (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011) are examples of pedagogies requiring use of real world, authentic experiences for student learning.

Service-learning is a widely used experiential learning pedagogy for civic engagement, providing a framework and strategies for linking students' academic studies and courses to relevant, real social problems and needs in communities (Campus Compact, 2009). Service-learning links conceptual learning and volunteer experiences with reflection and discussion. Much research has documented service-learning's effectiveness in promoting students' positive views of volunteering (Holland, 2005; Jacoby, 2009). In nursing education, faculty described how they successfully incorporated political and policy teaching through service-learning courses (Nokes et al., 2005; O'Brien-Larivée, 2011; Olsan et al., 2003; Solomon Cohen & Miloni-Nuzzo, 2001). Teachers can adapt service-learning's effective pedagogy of experiential learning

to design and conduct classroom-based civic learning experiences as well as link classroom learning directly with service-learning projects.

Colby et al. (2007) found five pedagogical strategies that particularly fostered civic engagement learning in their study of colleges in the Political Engagement Project (PEP). The five strategies that provided students with real, authentic experiences to learn were: “political discussion and deliberation, political research and action projects, invited speakers and program-affiliated mentors, external placements, and structured reflection” (p. 18). College students who participated in PEP courses using some combination of these strategies had an increase in four skill areas important for participation in democratic processes: political influence and action; political analysis and judgment; communication and leadership; and teamwork and collaboration (p. 15). Use of these pedagogies took students beyond critical thinking, which emphasizes rational, logical thinking processes, to more complex thinking involving seeing multiple perspectives, working with others successfully and developing interests, attitudes, and passions for community work (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

### Learning Together

Common to most pedagogies of engagement is an increased emphasis on learning with others (Innes, 2004). There is reduced emphasis on faculty talking and lecturing and more deliberate structuring of students talking with each other, faculty, and anyone else who is part of their learning (Carini et al., 2006; Kuh, 2001, 2003; Pascarella, 2001). When this happens, a shift happens in classrooms, and students discover that there are many sources of learning and authority and that they themselves are both learners and knowers. They begin to listen to others and have opportunities to understand the multi-

perspectival nature of knowledge as they explore and learn together. This strengthens communication and collaboration skills as well as increases students' civic and political efficacy (Spiezio et al., 2005). A fundamental constructivist principle of this learning is that knowledge is socially constructed in community and dialogue with others (Innes, 2004).

Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Smith et al., 2005) is a well-researched educational theoretical framework that supports students' learning in groups leading to development of attitudes and skills needed for collaborative work with others. Five essential components of Cooperative Learning must be present to make cooperation work: *positive interdependence*, *individual accountability*, *promotive interaction*, *social skills*, and *group processing*. Frequent opportunities to practice and evaluate skills are needed. Cooperative Learning is backed by much research showing its efficacy in both classroom and distance education (Smith et al., 2005). Relational knowing is another collaborative learning approach for civic engagement that shifts the process and goal of learning away from individualistic learning achievement to experiencing diversity and multiplicity of perspectives in order to solve problems together (Schneider, 2000).

Learning through dialogue and deliberation in learning communities is another collaborative approach used in civic engagement (Colby et al., 2007). Learning communities for online learning have been well-documented as a means to facilitate effective discussion amongst students and faculty (Rovai, 2007), foster trust and reduce alienation (Rovai & Wighting, 2005) and develop deep cognitive skills (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Rovai, Wighting, & Lucking 2004; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009). Online asynchronous discussions are particularly effective when both students and

teachers participate in discussions, course expectations are communicated clearly, and course design and organization are intentional and transparent (Shea, Li, & Pickett, 2006). The use of deliberate controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 2003) and other strategies to practice reasoned political dialogue helps promote skills of careful listening, understanding, open-mindedness, respect, and use of evidence. These skills are important not only in political engagement but in all forms of teamwork and collaborative effort.

### Pedagogies of Engagement and Blended Online Learning

The pedagogies of engagement discussed in the previous section are also appropriate to support learning in distance education, including online education. Nursing programs were early adopters of online education in higher education, first for graduate nursing education, and then for baccalaureate completion by registered nurses (RN) with associate degrees. Many undergraduate and graduate nursing programs are delivered wholly or in part via online and other distance modalities (Washer, 2001). Synchronous instruction occurs in live, real-time contexts in classrooms or online. Asynchronous instruction means students do not have to be online at the same time, but instead, have the flexibility to discuss and do class activities at their convenience.

Access, convenience, and flexibility in obtaining education are prime reasons for students choosing online nursing education (Halstead & Billings, 2009; Mancuso-Murphy, 2007). Nursing and severe nursing faculty shortages have contributed to new delivery options. Many students would not access and complete nursing education without online option availability (Young & Norgard, 2006). Paradoxically, students express preferences for face-to-face classes at the same time they are enrolling in online courses in increasing numbers (Kelly, Ponton, & Rovai, 2007; Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr,

2006; Rovai, Ponton, Derrick, & Davis, 2006). A form of online education that may address this paradox is blended or hybrid online education (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Vaughan, 2010). The phrase “*blended online*” will be used to refer to this type of education or course in the remainder of this report. Relevant research on online text-based, asynchronous discussions and learning in online courses is included in this review and the word “online” is used broadly to include blended online learning except where otherwise noted.

### Blended Online Education Described

Blended online education is education designed and delivered using the best features of both online and live classroom education to create a quality learning environment and experience for students (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Vaughan, 2010). An excellent blended online course incorporates both online and live components which are intentionally used to foster engaged student learning. Specific technology and/or live experiences are not just ‘add on’s’ but used deliberately to achieve particular learning experiences and outcomes. There is great variety in how these courses are structured and enacted due to the potential combinations that exist in blending live and online experiences (Overbaugh & Nickel, 2011).

### Quality, Engaged Learning in Blended Education

Online education delivery has challenged faculty to re-examine notions of quality teaching and learning. Earliest studies of online learning were done comparing online learning to traditional classrooms with the assumption that face-to-face learning was best (Brennan, 2008; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Comparisons of online with

face-to-face learning eventually revealed differences sometimes supporting greater learning in online courses (Kelly et al., 2007; Shea et al., 2006) and other times favoring traditional classroom learning (Rovai et al., 2006). Over time, researchers teased out nuances of these comparisons and concluded effective learning was more related to pedagogical practices rather than delivery medium (Bernard et al., 2004; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). In other words, good pedagogical knowledge and use influenced learning more than how a course was delivered (Billings, 2007). The medium of delivery for learning may require new and/or different pedagogical strategies than are used in traditional classrooms.

Pedagogies promoting engaged student learning in online courses with emphasis on moral dimensions of learning, active student participation, connection to real world experiences, and involvement with others in learning are well-documented in the literature. Billings (2000) and others (Billings, Connors, & Skiba, 2001; Billings, Skiba, & Connors, 2005; Burruss, Billings, Brownrigg, Skiba, & Connors, 2009) conducted studies based on Chickering and Gamson's (1991) best practices in student learning, which resulted in benchmarks for best practices in online nursing education. A framework based on these was developed to support design and delivery of quality online courses and programs (Billings et al., 2005). Four major components—educational practices, use of technology, outcomes, and student support—composed this framework, which is consistent with indicators of engaged learning in the NSSE.

Research supports the use of text-based, online asynchronous discussions boards for engaged learning, such as the one used for the NURS 420 course. Use of collaboration through discussion online in nursing education yields better satisfaction

(Mancuso-Murphy, 2007), attitudes (Bernard et al., 2004), and connection (Billings et al., 2005) in students taking online courses. Research suggests online discussion interactions promote more honest expression of controversial ideas and viewpoints (Colby, 2006), time for reflection (Buckley, Beyna, & Dudley-Brown, 2005), space for quieter students to speak (Rovai, 2007) and appreciation of diverse perspectives (Finegold & Cooke, 2006), all of which are supported in constructivist views of engaged learning for civic engagement. Weaknesses of online discussion include lack of visual cues during discussions, technology problems, message and reading overload (Harasim, 2000), and group problems with non-contribution (Finegold & Cooke, 2006). Having an established environment of trust in discussions contributed greatly to students' managing the weaknesses and feeling successful in online learning (Finegold & Cooke, 2006; Rovai, 2007, 2004).

A body of work evaluating the relationship of online learning to the sense of community in online classes has emerged (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Rovai, 2007; Rovai et al., 2004). The Classroom and School Community Inventory (CSCI) was used to measure students' sense of community in online courses and significant positive relationships were found between establishing a sense of community in online learning and students' productivity, learning achievement, persistence, and satisfaction. Two dimensions of community, social and learning, were identified. *Social community* was characterized by affective values like trust, spirit, safety, and cohesiveness, while *learning community* was the feeling of having shared norms and achievement of educational goals. Online learning communities require the development of both kinds of community, nourishing knowledge as well as interactional and social needs.

Instructor presence and interaction was important in creating conditions for engaged online learning. In Cobb's (2011) study of undergraduate nursing students' perception of online learning in groups, creating an environment that fostered comfort, connection with others, and a sense of togetherness in learning was most important. This sense of social presence in online learning was more important to female than male students. Ways for instructors to build social presence included instructor-facilitated discussions, providing social connection through introductions, specific forums for social chatting, and acknowledging students' work and perspectives. Other instructor strategies for fostering social presence included role modeling respectful communication, addressing disrespectful communication, and maintaining a positive tone in all communications throughout the course (Koeckeritz, Malkiewicz, & Henderson, 2002).

Instructor interaction in discussions also contributes to students' deeper learning in online interactions (Buckley et al., 2005; Garrison et al., 2000; Rovai, 2007). While student learning and interaction should be central, feedback from faculty in discussions contributes to engagement by acknowledging students' perspectives, asking probing questions to elicit deeper meanings and connections, refocusing discussions or encouraging students to actively seek answers in order to create meaningful understanding. Instructors also correct misinformation or provide new knowledge when needed in discussions. Garrison et al. (2000) conceptualized *teacher presence* in online discussions, identifying instructional management, building understanding, and direct instruction as three indicators of the instructors' role in an online learning experience.

In summary, pedagogies of engagement support instructional decisions and strategies in online and blended courses. Research and literature support the use of



principles of engaged learning, like those identified in the NSSE (2003, 2009), to support instructional design and decisions for civic learning in nursing education. Online, asynchronous discussion forums can be used to promote high-level, complex conversations for civic learning for students. Blended online learning courses may effectively capture the face to face, verbal, and spontaneous nature of the traditional classroom in conjunction with the deeper, more rigorous immersion required of students in online discussion boards.

Thus far, pedagogies of engagement with general application to engaged learning and civic engagement have been described. In the next section, specific learning frameworks for civic engagement education are presented.

#### Selected Learning Frameworks for Civic Engagement

A number of potential frameworks exist to guide educators who want to teach civic engagement in higher education. Jacoby (2009) called these developmental frameworks because most were designed to help students progress in a formative civic journey based on the notion that civic engagement is a lifelong process requiring on-going practice and energy. No one course should be expected to teach everything about civic engagement. Some frameworks address the broadest range of civic skills; others focus more specifically on political learning and engagement. Because NURS 420 and this study emphasize political learning, this is the emphasis of discussion here.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004a, 2004b) studied ten US programs that claimed to develop citizenship skills and attitudes. From this, they identified three conceptions of “good citizen”: “personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented” (p. 237). The *personally responsible* citizen pays taxes, votes, contributes to causes and those less

fortunate, volunteers, and lives according to values of honesty, hard work, and integrity. Character education curricula would exemplify these programs. Criticism of this view stems from its emphasis on individual behavior, charitable giving, and lack of concern for the underlying causes of social issues and problems. Most importantly, the characteristics and traits of individuals in this model could be just as desirable in totalitarian systems; they are not fundamentally democratic. In a *participatory* citizen view, the focus is on preparing students to engage with others in community and governmental efforts. Skill development for leading and organizing are important; collectivity and skills in policy processes are also needed. Values of trust, commitment, relationships, and a view of the common good are emphasized. In the *justice-oriented* view, students identify social problems and issues and seek to address fundamental changes in communities, organizations, and society. The critical analysis of social, economic, political, and other forces differentiates this from participatory citizenship. Knowledge and skills of social reform and change are needed within this model.

In another construction of citizenship, Musil (2003) articulated six “expressions of citizenship” (p. 5) as exclusionary, oblivious, naïve, charitable, reciprocal, and generative. *Exclusionary* citizenship is defined by one culture and excludes others by emphasizing a single point of view. *Oblivious* citizenship occurs when students participate in projects in which the emphasis is observation and benefits are primarily for the students. *Naïve* citizenship is practiced when communities are viewed as resources without deeper understanding of social, historical, and other factors influencing them. Musil identified *charitable* as the level at which most college-level volunteerism (often through service-learning) was promoted. It is defined by altruism and seeing others need

help. The model of practice is deprivation-based, problem-oriented, and not aimed at altering underlying structures in an organization or society. Musil saw this as a good starting point if service-learning included reflection for students to analyze existing structures and processes for historical impacts, potential inequalities, and related social policies. In the *reciprocal* expression of citizenship, civic engagement is valued and promoted. Courses and projects are community-focused, partnerships developed, and community empowerment is a more central goal of the experience. The *generative* form of citizenship expression is characterized by the central goal of civic prosperity for all, the “well being of the whole” (p. 7). Communities are viewed as integrated wholes where all can flourish. Leadership, knowledge of, and use of political processes, deep cultural understanding, and sophisticated systems skills are needed and developed.

Musil’s view of citizenship is encompassed in the framework called the Civic Learning Spiral (2003, 2009). This developmental model of civic learning has six “braids”—the self, communities and cultures, knowledge, skills, values, and public action. The model is envisioned as a spiral with increasing complexity and integration as learners progress in developing their civic understanding and roles. Outcomes for civic learning for each of the six braids are provided as guides for civic engagement using this framework.

Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004a, 2004b) and Musil’s (2009) frameworks are important for their conceptions of differing kinds of citizenship and direction for teachers to be deliberate and intentional not only about teaching these concepts in the first place, but also in terms of answering the question “what kind of citizen?” they are aiming to develop. Each conception of citizenship has corresponding, inherent values and

assumptions, and political implications of each “may privilege some political perspectives regarding the ways problems are framed and responded to” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, p. 263). Both models of citizenship help civic engagement teachers make decisions about learning goals. In addition, citizenship is not to be interpreted literally as only for those meeting formal citizenship criteria but as a process of participatory democracy enacted in many ways, which includes those who do not meet formal criteria of citizenship.

Colby et al.’s (2003) four spheres for political learning presented earlier in this chapter provides a framework for teaching and learning civic engagement. In addition, Colby et al.’s (2007) study of 21 PEP courses in colleges and universities provides further direction for learning goals or outcomes for college students’ political learning. Their analysis led to recommending the following skills be taught: 1) political influence and action—knowing how to go about doing something about a sociopolitical problem; 2) political analysis and judgment—reasoning for informed opinions and actions; 3) communication and leadership—conveying information and communicating effectively in a range of political situations; and teamwork and collaboration—working and making decisions with others to address issues.

#### Civic Engagement Learning Frameworks for Nursing Education

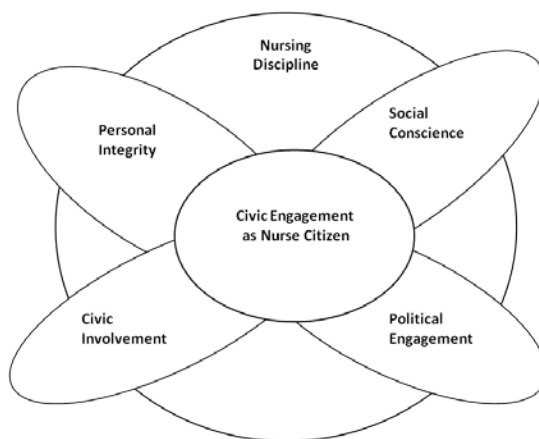
There are few frameworks for civic engagement in nursing education to guide educators. Models by Milio (2002) and Russell and Fawcett (2005) described earlier in this chapter provided guidance for curricular content and delivery in policy education specifically, particularly doctoral graduate education. These frameworks are important in advancing nurses’ education, work, and research in policy arenas. Decisions about course

and curricular learning activities can be extrapolated from these frameworks; however, the frameworks guide the content and process of policy work, not the pedagogy of students' *learning* about policy work. These frameworks also do not address civic engagement broadly nor do they direct the development of students' dispositions for civic work, which includes political dimensions in addition to policy.

Civic engagement education requires knowledge, skills, and explicit recognition of underlying values within a program or course (Colby et al., 2003; Erlich, 2000a; Sullivan, 2000). For undergraduate nursing students to successfully learn and work with communities on social problems and issues requires the student to become aware of personal values and beliefs, to learn the values and obligations of a discipline, and to integrate the two within the self. Civic engagement education aims to foster this exploration of values alongside integration of knowledge and skills with the goal of educating citizens and professionals for responsible participation in a democratic society (Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

In nursing literature, specific civic activities by nurses have most often been described as involvement in policy making, political advocacy, or political engagement rather than specifically as civic engagement (Carnegie & Kiger, 2009; Falk Rafael, 2005; IOM, 2010). For nurses, "Policy advocacy is the use of one's expertise, knowledge, values, influence, power, and position in order to influence the process of change, decision-making and allocation of resources in the political and policymaking arena" (Gehrke, 2008, p. 55-56). The ethical foundations for civic engagement are consistent with nursing's professional ethics and values. Civic engagement is an overarching process that includes policy advocacy and broadens the scope of nursing activities to the

civic arena. By adapting Colby et al.'s (2003) four spheres for civic learning, a conceptual model of the spheres embedded in the discipline of nursing is formed. The intersection of the spheres is the enactment of nursing skills and values through civic engagement in a nurse citizen role represented by Figure 2.1 (Gehrke, 2008).



**Figure 2.1 Model of Civic Engagement in Nursing Discipline**

### Summary in Relation to NURS 420 and This Study

The intent of the blended online learning experience in the NURS 420 course is to create a space for learning where a sense of community supports students and faculty learning about political ideas together (Dewey, 1916/2002; Henderson & Kesson, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Rovai, 2007). Students reflect on their experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and converse with peers and the instructor about their readings, activities, and professional obligations to gradually learn the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed for political and policy advocacy in nursing. The course is a personal journey of learning where they are encouraged to examine their own values and history along with power, processes of democracy, and citizenship through the disciplinary lens of nursing.

Offering courses and experiences for nursing students to learn about political engagement and advocacy is consistent with civic engagement literature and research on student engagement and democratic education (Colby et al., 2003; Colby, 2006; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). Students benefit from having structured experiences to learn and engage with disciplinary concepts like “health for all” in the context of active participation in a democracy. Students gradually become more open to the idea of engaging in political action and exploring that notion within their lives and the nursing profession. I aim to create an online environment where students can feel secure in voicing their ideas in a territory unfamiliar to them, that of the political sphere. I hope to create a sense of public responsibility in the students taking this course and beyond as they graduate and become nursing professionals.

There is support in the literature and discipline of nursing for undergraduate nursing students to be taught how to participate civically through policy making and political advocacy processes. There are potential benefits to nursing education, to those served by nurses, and to the discipline in having politically engaged, skilled graduates and practicing professionals. Relevant literature framing this study was presented. While there was ample literature that anecdotally documented *what* political knowledge should be learned and *how* this was accomplished in some courses and programs, there was a gap in the research identifying how undergraduate nursing students *actually learned* these concepts and processes. No research was located that explored undergraduate students’ processes of learning political or policy concepts.

This study of undergraduate students’ learning in one undergraduate nursing policy course begins to address this gap in the literature. The literature from civic

learning supported teaching civic engagement from a disciplinary perspective. Teaching for high levels of learning engagement is more likely to lead to deep, effective learning. It was appropriate to study how students in my class learned political and policy concepts presented within a nursing context. Therefore, this study was guided by two overarching questions. 1) How do undergraduate nursing students, in one online blended course, make sense of civic engagement processes like policy making and political advocacy, which are often seen as unrelated to nursing? 2) During this online blended course, how do these students progress in integrating these civic engagement processes into their views of nursing? Specific sub-questions were:

- 1) How does involvement with other students and the teacher influence learning these concepts and skills?
- 2) What course activities facilitate or constrain making sense of these civic engagement processes in nursing?
- 3) How do students' views of themselves as political actors change as they progress through the course?
- 4) What pivotal turning points or transformational moments may occur in the course of students' learning?

Constructivist grounded theory research was appropriate to address these questions and study students learning processes. In Chapter Three, the methods for this study are presented in detail.



### CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The aim of this study was to describe and interpret how undergraduate nursing students in one nursing online blended course made sense of civic engagement processes like policy making and political advocacy in nursing. Students learning processes were the focus of attention. When the research goal is to learn about processes involving multiple meanings, experiences, and interpretations, qualitative research is appropriate (Charmaz, 2004, 2006, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Because of the lack of research evidence identifying how nursing students actually make sense of civic processes like policy making and politics, a constructivist, emergent grounded theory study was designed and conducted. This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Two overarching questions guided the study: 1) How do undergraduate nursing students, in one blended online course, make sense of civic engagement processes like policy making and political advocacy, which are often seen as unrelated to nursing? 2) During this blended online course, how do these students progress in integrating these civic engagement processes into their views of nursing? This chapter presents the following details of study design and methods: 1) constructivist grounded theory overview, 2) context, 3) data sources and preparation, 4) data analysis, 5) reflexivity, and 6) trustworthiness and limitations.

### **Constructivist Grounded Theory Overview**

The constructivist grounded theory method of Kathy Charmaz (2003, 2004, 2006, 2008) was used to design and conduct this study because the inductive, emergent character of the method was appropriate to investigating processes like students' learning. In addition, the assumptions and philosophical foundations were congruent with the constructivist philosophy and practices I used to design and teach the blended online course taken by participants in this study. This method is supported by two philosophical foundations: symbolic interactionism and pragmatism. Symbolic interactionism is a perspective that says interaction with others in social processes leads to how people understand and interpret meanings (Blumer, 1969; Munhall, 2007; Snow, 2001). In pragmatism, truth and knowledge are rooted in context and usefulness (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wuest, 2007). Concepts like truth and reality cannot be studied without also considering the context, society, culture, theoretical lens, and multiple perspectives of the phenomena. The generation of theory rooted inductively in data that is useful for situations and settings in practice is consistent with pragmatism. This kind of theory, often called *substantive theory*, interprets or explains a specific, defined problem or process in a given area, such as education (Charmaz, 2006).

Emergence is a key characteristic of constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz (2008) described this method as emergent because it is an inductive, iterative process for data collection and analysis. Systematic data analysis, successive levels of theoretical abstraction interwoven with conceptual insights from the literature and frequent re-examination of the data lead to flexible, creative emergent theory.

The generated theory emerges inductively from data analysis through coding, formation of categories, increasingly abstract conceptualization, and deduction as the researcher iteratively works from data, literature, categories, and concepts back again to data for verification and testing (Charmaz, 2004, 2006). Four processes for data analysis in constructivist grounded theory were used in this study (Charmaz, 2006). These were 1) intensive coding, 2) written memos, 3) theoretical sampling, and 4) theoretical saturation. The constant comparative process (Glaser, 1967) was a foundational strategy used within all four processes to derive themes, compare data segments, conceptualize categories, and strengthen trustworthiness (Coyne & Cowley, 2006). Staying open to how and when to apply the four processes is important. Inductively going back and forth between the data using a constant comparative process grounds and systematically focuses the analysis. In addition, the researcher looks outside and beyond the data to “abductively” form all possible explanations for a finding and looks for cases to further test the reasoning before making a decision (Charmaz, 2006, p. 186). Through these processes, the “theoretical reach” of the theory is elevated (Charmaz, 2006, p. 128).

Though processes for collecting, preparing, and analyzing data are described in what appears to be a linear and stepwise fashion, in reality, data collection and analysis are done *simultaneously* (Charmaz, 2006; Wuest, 2007). To generate theory, data must first be deconstructed, and then reconstructed through the analysis process (Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Wright, 2007). Grounded theory method is circular and intertwining in nature with analysis starting as soon as initial data is collected. This drives subsequent data collection and propels the cycle forward (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Luckerhoff &

Guillemette, 2011). The next section details how constructivist grounded theory method was applied by providing the context for this study.

### **Context**

“Any analysis is contextually situated in time, place, culture, and situation” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). Interpretation of participants’ learning in this study includes consideration of how it is embedded in existing environmental, political, historical, economic, and other important frames of reference.

### Time

Pre-licensure undergraduate nursing senior students took the NURS 420, *Policy, Power & Voice* course during spring semester 2011 from mid-January through mid-May 2011. Data collection started May 5, 2011 after the course was concluded and grades submitted to the Registrar and continued through September 30, 2011. Analysis was conducted from May 5, 2011 through September 2012.

### Place

The study was conducted in its natural setting at one undergraduate nursing school in a northwestern state university in the United States (US). Approximately 20,000 students were enrolled in the university. About 600 nursing students were enrolled in the nursing major; with approximately 70-75 pre-licensure undergraduate students graduating each semester.

## Culture

Many undergraduate nursing programs have professional nursing issues and leadership courses as senior course offerings. It is less common for programs to have courses specifically focused on political and policy advocacy with the aim of fostering nursing participation in civic engagement processes. Political thinking is foreign to most nursing students. Literature and professional obligations document its relevance to nurses' practice in all settings.

Students in this undergraduate program take three semesters of pre-requisite courses prior to admission to nursing. Five semesters of nursing courses and clinical labs are needed to complete the program. Approximately 70-75 students enroll in the NURS 420 course each semester. Most nursing courses are currently offered only as live courses for pre-licensure students due to the need to maintain a ratio of teachers to students at 1 to 75 rather than the reduced ratio of 1 to 20-25 usually maintained for online courses. Students can take online courses through university offerings for core and non-nursing pre-requisite or support courses.

## Situation

### Instructor Experiences and Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

As an "early adopter" of online teaching and learning at my university, I have designed and taught blended online, fully online, and live courses in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs since 1998. I am a digital immigrant, that is, someone not naturally inclined to OL or digital learning technologies for personal enjoyment and learning, but rather a teacher who, early on, saw online learning as something students

would choose for convenience and access. My goal is to create meaningful, rich learning in course environments for students, regardless of how classes are delivered.

My experiences and beliefs teaching undergraduate students about policy reflect the following about teaching and learning: students learn as much or more from each other as they do from the teacher; shared meaning making facilitates the process of learning; students learning from and with each other facilitates engagement with the topic and each other as learners, future professionals, and colleagues; and learning about policy making and political processes seems to involve a transformational experience about one's ability and desire to engage in civic and other processes that impact nursing and health.

These understandings are consistent with the philosophical foundations of constructivist pedagogies of engagement and constructivist grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006; Henderson & Kesson, 2004). NURS 420 was designed to foster engagement with course concepts and one another to learn about policy making and political advocacy. Activities were intended to promote discussion of real health policy issues, questioning and use of relevant information and use of collaboration to produce both team and individually produced projects. I actively participate in students' learning. My roles are to facilitate, coach, question, guide, assess, and evaluate learning. In addition, I strive to model respectful inquiry and engagement with course ideas and encourage students' interaction with each other as peers and future colleagues.

#### NURS 420 Policy, Power & Voice Course

In spring 2011, senior students took a required 3-credit course called *NURS 420 Power, Policy & Voice* designed and taught by the researcher. This will be referred to as

NURS 420 for the remainder of this document. The course occurred in semester seven of an 8-semester program and was taken concurrently with public health nursing and its lab, a case management nursing course, and any electives or core courses students needed.

Prior to taking NURS 420 in semesters five and six, students took nursing courses emphasizing content and concepts for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). In NURS 420, the classroom environment for learning changed from what students were used to—a more traditional learning environment emphasizing lecture and testing to one of discussion, reflection, and engagement with course material, each other, faculty, and the notion of nursing and the greater good for society.

The course blended the study of current health and nursing issues with the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for participation in policy and political advocacy in organizations, communities, and the profession. It was based on the view that all nurses, regardless of practice setting and specialty, use policy advocacy and participation in political processes in their nursing roles. Civic engagement and policy advocacy were important and necessary to fully realize nursing practice to increase health in individuals, communities, and populations (Appendix A, Course Objectives).

Two sections of the course were taught by the researcher each semester. Students self-selected the section in which they enrolled. One section was live, on-campus; the other was taught as a blended online section. Both sections used the same course objectives, syllabi, readings, weekly assignments, course projects, and outcomes and used the Blackboard® (Bb) course management system. Students in both sections had class together, in-person, and on campus for five of the total sixteen weeks. Live classes were used strategically for interaction and activities best accomplished in-person including a

first week orientation to the class, a field trip to the state capitol and legislature, guest speakers, and production of electronic policy newsletters (Appendix B, Course Calendar). The other eleven weeks of the semester were online or live depending on the section of the course in which students enrolled. The course syllabus, assignment guidelines, rubrics, and resource materials were available in the Bb course site. Materials for “Getting Started” informed students about course navigation, learning strategies for success in the course and more. Advice and tips for making a schedule and managing time in DBs were provided in the Bb site in the form of a suggested weekly schedule for posting homework and checking back in discussion boards to read and respond to messages. Suggestions for managing Bb and technology were also included as part of the course “Getting Started” documents (Appendix C, Getting the Most out of Class).

During the course, students in the blended online section were assigned to four learning groups of 6-8 students each for weekly discussions and policy newsletter project work. Students were placed in groups by the instructor with both people they knew and others they did not know with nuanced consideration of gender, ethnicity, and personality for balance. Learning groups were named A, B, C, and D. Weekly discussion assignments were completed online in private group Bb DB forums.

During a live class meeting the first week of the semester, students were informed I would be present in their weekly DBs and my intent during interaction was to help their ideas take ‘center stage.’ I said I would ask questions to extend thinking, correct misinterpretations, provide additional resources and information, assess and give feedback on weekly progress in discussion, and evaluate performance.



Each week, discussion questions relevant to the week's topic were posted in Bb, and students were required to respond to questions and discuss ideas with one another. Questions were purposefully open-ended and sometimes provocative to generate critical thinking, elicit perspectives, and explore underlying values of issues (Appendix D, Weekly Essay and Discussion Questions example). Weekly assignments required both individual and group achievement components (Appendix E, Class Participation Rubric).

Experiential Learning and Course Assignments. Experiential learning is intentionally used in NURS 420 to inform students about health and nursing issues discussed in the public arena as well as to illustrate issue content, illuminate policy making processes, and to explore basic questions of who participates, how, and why. Discussion of current news, events, and issues are incorporated into online essays written by the instructor, occur weekly in online discussion groups, and are used for topic selection for the Advocacy Paper, a major course assignment.

During the course, questions about whether and how nursing is involved in policy decision making and change processes are raised. Questions from the instructor such as "who participates?" and "why?" challenge students. The presence or absence of nurses in political processes is explored in discussions. Participation in political processes is examined as a means to increasing health of all with a goal of promoting nurses' participation at any level from any position they have in health care.

One course requirement is attendance at two policy meetings such as at the state legislature, city council, or meetings in community agencies, organizations, or professional associations. Students choose meetings based on personal interests, time availability, type of meeting, etc. They are encouraged to choose different kinds of

meetings (one public meeting, one private organizational one) and to attend meetings different from ones they have perhaps attended in the past. The goal of the assignment is to view and experience policy processes, apply course concepts, and to identify potential avenues for policy participation for themselves as citizens and nursing professionals.

Other experiential learning features a visit to the state capitol with legislators and/or guests invited to speak to students and help them learn about policy processes. Students also view the Legislature in session and attend legislative committee meetings. During the semester of this study, a political science student intern conducted a mock committee meeting at the Statehouse and answered questions about legislative committee process.

Students enrolled in NURS 420 did not know at the course outset that they would be asked to participate in this study. The course was conducted with the same philosophy, conceptual content and major assignments as had been done in semesters preceding and subsequent to spring 2011.

### Participants

After final course grades were submitted, a graduate teaching assistant made a presentation to the online blended section, recruited participants, and obtained consents on my behalf. Fifteen students of 29 total gave consent for all research procedures and three additional students consented to use of Bb transcripts but declined interviews. One of the 15 who consented to all procedures received an “Incomplete” in the course so was not eligible since the final course grade could not be submitted prior to recruitment and consent. The three who consented to Bb transcript use only were noted and set aside for potential use in a future study. Fourteen (50%) of the eligible 28 students in the class

consented to full participation and were accepted as participants for this study. All four DB learning groups were represented by participants with 3 from learning group A, 3 from B, 2 from C, and 6 from group D.

The table below shows demographics for participants and non-participants.

**Table 3.1 Participants and Non-Participants Demographics and Course Information**

	Participants n=14		Non-participants n=14	
<b>Gender</b>	Female	13 (93%)	Female	14 (100%)
	Male	1 (7%)	Male	0
<b>Age</b>	34.28 years (range 24-46)		Class cohort mean 29 years (range 18-56)	
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Native American	1 (7%)	Class cohort Hispanic 2 (3.77%) Asian 1 (1.89%) Caucasian (94.34%)	
	Caucasian	13 (93%)		
<b>Class Assignments &amp; Final Course Scores</b>				
Class Participation Average Percentage (DB* posts)	29.71% (of total 30%)		29.53% (of total 30%)	
Advocacy Paper Mean %	28.64% (of total 30%)		27.13% (of total 30%)	
Final Course Mean Score	96.60		94.00	
<b>Number of Student Accesses to DBs in Bb</b>				
# of student accesses to DB forum	Range 45-139 accesses		Range 35-82 accesses	
Total # student DB accesses	971 total with 69.35/week ave.		743 total with 53.07/ week ave.	

\*DB = Discussion board.

The fourteen participants were compared to fourteen non-participants in NURS 420 on selected demographic and course information. Female participants (93%) predominated in the sample at a rate similar to the senior class as a whole. Participants averaged about 5 years older than the senior class cohort age. Participants' ethnicity (93%) was close to the percentage of Caucasians in the nursing program (94%) and is

higher than the percentage in the RN workforce in the state (88%, Idaho Department of Labor, 2011). Participants represented ethnicities other than Caucasians at a rate lower than the Idaho RN workforce (12%).

Achievement on major course assignments such as Class Participation and the Advocacy Paper was examined to determine if there were obvious differences between participants and non-participants. Mean percentages for these assignments were equivalent, and the mean final course score equitable, with non-participants having a slightly lower score.

An area of difference appeared in students' accesses to DB forums. In Bb, access to the group forum's DB is counted each time a person clicks on the group forum link. Access simply shows entry to the forum but does not show what is actually done while in the DB. Activities possible while in the DB could include simply checking in, reading responses, writing messages, posting homework, exploring links in DBs, etc. Participants' showed both increased range and increased mean accesses to DBs for weekly discussions compared to non-participants' accesses even though both groups had similar Class Participation scores. While not a large difference, the possibility is raised that something may have been different about participants' learning groups and/or discussions or that participants were perhaps predisposed to greater learning engagement, propensity for online learning, or had differences in political learning needs than were the non-participants.

Data is meaningless without knowledge of the context in which it is embedded. The contextual influences related to the course, participants, and I as researcher provided

important frames of reference for interpreting findings in this study. In the next section, data sources and preparation of sources for analysis are described.

### **Data Sources and Preparation**

Gathering rich, descriptive data from multiple sources provided depth and scope for this study, led to understanding learning from participants' perspectives, and aided generation of theoretical categories. Data was gathered from interviews, course documents, course communications, and interview notes. Each source and preparation for analysis is described in the following section. Challenges with simultaneous data collection and analysis are explained.

#### Interviews

An interview with each participant after the course concluded was the primary data source for this study. The interview provided space for participant-researcher interaction and reflective conversation of participants' perspectives about course learning. It also added an opportunity for real-time, verbal and nonverbal interaction after weeks of mostly text-based online communication.

The *Post-course Interview* occurred within one month of course completion (mid-May to mid-June) to obtain data while course information was fresh in participants' minds and prior to them leaving the area for summer work and vacations. Twelve interviews were conducted by phone and two participants preferred face-to-face interviews. Participants were given choices of off-campus locations nearer their homes to facilitate their comfort and attempt to decrease power dynamics of traditional instructor-student interactions, however, the two who chose face-to-face interviews had

appointments in the nursing building the same day as scheduled interviews and felt it was more convenient for them. One of the two who interviewed face-to-face preferred my office because it was “warmer and more comfortable” for an infant brought to the interview. Interviews were conducted in private, enclosed rooms with only each participant (in person or by speakerphone) and me present, with the exception of the interview where the infant was also present. Verbal assent to continue participation and record interviews was obtained at each contact during the study. All interviews were recorded with a digital audio device and a cassette tape recorder as backup. Interviews were downloaded and stored on a password-protected computer. Audio files were erased from the digital audio device after transcripts were prepared.

A *Post-course Interview* guide provided a semi-structured format and allowed latitude for asking probing questions (Appendix F). Questions were designed with enough detail to satisfy IRB review yet still allow for new perspectives to be explored in iterative cycles of interviewing and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003). The interview guides for this study contained more questions than were actually asked during interviews to illustrate potential lines of questioning, which could be taken pursuant to information shared by participants. Questions were re-ordered slightly after the first interview to provide a more logical flow and move more sensitive questions involving potential hindrances and instructor influences on learning to later in interviews. I also asked questions about hindrances in multiple ways in some interviews, changing wording to “What barriers might have influenced your learning, if any?” and “What suggestions do you have for improvement, if any?” if participants did not identify hindrances in order to give them every opportunity to answer as honestly as possible. I also listened carefully

at the end of interviews when I asked participants if they had anything else they wanted to add or say. Sometimes participants added information not said earlier in the interview, which I could then explore more fully.

Fourteen Post-Course Interviews were conducted within one month of course conclusion generating 256 total pages of data averaging 18.2 pages per interview. Interview length ranged from 25 – 60 minutes with an average length of 39.2 minutes. My handwritten interview notes captured details and impressions before, during, and after each interview (described later under Course Documents).

#### Preparation of Interview Data for Analysis

Formal interview notes were written, in most cases, within 24 hours of each interview to capture my immediate impressions and note themes. I listened to all interview recordings and transcribed each interview verbatim, which immediately brought me close to the data. Each participant was given a code number, and a master unique identifier key was created and locked in a secure file drawer. All identifying information was deleted from data and replaced with the numeric code. Though I knew the participants and had been their teacher for the semester, this aided in providing a level of distance for me as I immersed myself into the role of researcher. Pseudonyms were later assigned to reduce participants' objectification in this written report.

Systematic use of computerized folders and files on a password-protected computer and binder notebooks containing original transcripts, interview notes, and memos were invaluable. These procedures organized volumes of accumulated data and were essential for easy retrieval and visualization of information in ongoing cycles of data collection and analysis.

## Documents

Several types of documents were used as supportive, triangulatory evidence in this study. These included course documents, teacher notes, course communications, and interview notes.

### Course Documents

Course documents included: syllabus, calendar, objectives, weekly faculty essays, assignment guidelines, rubrics, teacher notes, and any other documents routinely used by students or me during the conduct of the course. These documents helped provide context and original source material for analysis and interpretation of interview data and findings.

Teacher notes consisted of any notes or materials I *routinely* kept when teaching this course. Because the research did not start until participants were informed of and consented to the study, it was not appropriate to keep field notes on observations that might include them during the course itself (Lichtman, 2011). However, whenever I teach this course, I always keep notes on student progress in online discussions to monitor and evaluate weekly sessions. Notes might include comments about students' illness or extenuating circumstances impacting performance. I also download and keep examples of my assessments in order to give students specific feedback and suggestions for improvement. Teacher notes also included any written comments I wrote on weekly essays or discussion questions as reminders to myself to make changes for future semesters.

An example illustrates how teacher notes were used. To help me monitor students' weekly online discussions, I routinely make a matrix-style grid using a shorthand code to assess quality and quantity of discussions and award grades.



Reviewing this data matrix during analysis helped me think of using Bb course statistics to examine participant and non-participant accesses to DBs. Teacher notes, like the other course documents, helped provide contextual information, provided “memory jogs” about course events or participant issues that might have arisen during the semester that were pertinent, or cued me to patterns or themes I would perhaps not have thought of or seen during analysis and writing up findings.

#### Preparation for Document Analysis

Course documents such as syllabi, objectives, calendar, assignment guidelines, and rubrics were downloaded from the Bb course site and saved in an electronic file once participants gave consent for the study after the conclusion of the course. Other course documents remained accessible in the secure Bb site if needed. Teacher notes were saved in a hard copy folder and examined for patterns and themes prior to interviews.

#### Course Communications

Course communications consisted of e-mails between me and participants in the course and announcements I posted to students from the course Bb site. Announcements were communications I posted in Bb while teaching the course and intended for guidance for the whole class. I also often e-mail Announcements directly to students if I want to be more certain they receive them. These ranged in content from the course welcome message to regular group feedback on learning group discussions, ways to boost learning and increase grades, clarifications of questions, and notices of policy meetings of interest for meeting a course requirement. Like course documents, these communications were examined for patterns and themes and helped provide context and original source

material for analysis and interpretation of interview data and findings. They also provided the original “voice” of communications between me and students, which was helpful to show the energy or emotion of the e-mail for analysis and writing findings.

#### Preparation of Course Communications for Analysis

E-mails related to the course were retrieved from GoogleMail from February 9 through May 10, 2011 and downloaded to computer files. Even though the semester started in mid-January, e-mails prior to this time could not be retrieved from the mail system. Only e-mail from participants were saved with the addition of e-mail from non-participant students who sent learning group homework or asked questions on behalf of the group that included a participant. E-mails were downloaded and saved as documents. All identifying information, including e-mail addresses, was removed and, in the case of participants, replaced with numeric codes. In the rare instances of e-mail from a non-participant who was communicating on behalf of a learning group that included a participant, the non-participant student’s name was removed and replaced with NP for “non-participant.”

Announcements were downloaded at the conclusion of the course and saved as documents. This preserved original dates and times from posts. They also remained available to me throughout the study via the university’s secure Bb system if needed.

#### Interview Notes

I recorded informal and formal interview notes. I made handwritten interview notes before, during, and after each interview and kept them in a spiral notebook. I recorded objective details like date, time, place, length of interview or any other event,

such as when a participant brought her infant to the interview. I also recorded subjective impressions that might be relevant to the context, like how I felt, comments made by the participant, “I have to go check on my four year old who is in the bathroom,” which might be relevant or help me be considerate about participants’ needs. Recording impressions about the participants’ speech like “hesitant,” “thoughtful,” “having trouble finding words,” and “ends statements so they sound like questions—does she want approval?” helped me capture emotive details. These handwritten notes helped “jog” my memory when I later wrote formal interview notes.

Formal interview notes were written within 24 hours of each interview to capture details of interviews for computer records and provided more detail than hand-written notes. I went beyond subjective and objective documentation to include themes and patterns noted in interviews. As interviews progressed, notes included speculation and early comparisons between participants’ statements. An example of a formal interview note for Casey is provided.

**Table 3.2 Interview Note, Casey**

<b>Interview Notes, Casey, 5/23/11</b>
...Casey answered questions with enthusiasm; she said she’d been thinking about the class since we’d have an interview. She was similar to Jordan, who had an interest in political things prior to the class. I specifically asked her to talk about that, her views at the beginning, as course progressed and after course. Similarly to Jordan, she voiced a renewed enthusiasm by course end. She talked about feeling a little jaded and cynical about politics prior to the course...

Both informal and formal interview notes provided guidance for me in questioning the next participant interviewed. They helped me explore emerging themes, use probing questions to reveal participants’ understandings, and provide for early conceptual ideas. In a few cases, when participants’ cancelled appointments or

scheduling required more than one interview in the same day, informal notes provided the means to at least note initial themes prior to the next interview.

#### Preparation of Interview Notes for Analysis

Handwritten interview notes were retained in a spiral notebook for the duration of the study. Any participant names were covered over and replaced with numeric codes once those were assigned. In formal interview notes, participants were identified by numeric code. Notes were read prior to writing memos about interviews providing rich material and a “jump-off” point for my thinking. Interview notes were important in preparing me for subsequent interviews in some cases when interviews had to be scheduled the same day. This is described in the next section.

#### Challenges with Simultaneity

I quickly became aware of the practicalities and tension involved in implementing simultaneous data collection and analysis. The fourteen *Post-course Interviews* were originally planned to be spaced so analysis could proceed between them to inform collection of data in subsequent interviews. Trying to schedule interviews within one month’s time after course conclusion *and* to meet participants’ scheduling and cancellation needs meant interviews were sometimes scheduled on the same day, challenging me with the simultaneity goal. In some cases, it was not possible to transcribe and analyze interview data prior to the next interview. To deal with these realities, I wrote interview notes, formal interview summaries, and transcribed interviews prior to the next scheduled one as much as possible with the exception of two dates when 2-3 interviews had to be scheduled on the same days. Reviewing written interview notes,

listening to interview recordings, and theme identification provided guidance for the subsequent interview(s) when that occurred (Charmaz, 2006; Coyne & Cowley, 2006).

In summary, interviews were the primary data source with course documents, communications, and interview notes used to support analysis and interpretation of findings. Systematic procedures for collecting, recording, and preparing data for analysis strengthened trustworthiness and provided an audit trail (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2006; McCann & Clark, 2003a, 2003b). Protocols guided data collection and preparation. The next section of this chapter provides details of data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

How I used each of Charmaz's (2006) four processes of intensive coding, written memos, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation is presented in this section with the goal of making analysis as transparent as possible. Though I was challenged with performing data collection, transcript preparation, and analysis simultaneously, the basic sequence of steps I followed after an interview was done and interview notes written was: *transcribe interview, do initial coding, write memo about themes and tentative focused codes, repeat sequence.*

#### Intensive Coding

Coding is the process of deconstructing the text of study artifacts for analysis. It is constant and comparative, meaning data collection proceeds simultaneously with analysis in an iterative, reflexive process (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Intensive coding required two processes: *initial* and *focused coding*. These processes "define what is happening in the data [so the researcher] can begin to grapple with what it means"

(Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This section addresses how I used coding in this study and adapted to address challenges of simultaneity.

Data, like that in the transcribed interviews, must be fractured or deconstructed to make sense of it, and I started this by doing *initial coding* (Charmaz, 2006). This was done by examining transcript texts literally line by line and asking myself questions like ‘what is happening here?’; ‘what is being thought, felt?’. Using gerunds (-ing words) while coding helped me focus on *processes* and *action* in participants’ transcripts. Initial coding immersed me in the data by focusing my attention on what was happening in line by line data segments, forcing me to look at deconstructed parts rather than impressions of the whole. The following example illustrates this coding.

**Table 3.3 Initial Line by Line Coding Example.**

<b>Casey, Transcript, p. 10</b>	<b>Line by Line Coding by PG</b>
Casey: Oh yes, for sure, yes...especially, it was funny...there was a couple students, we always struck a chord with each other if that’s what you want to say? But, I would post something and then I would be like quick, be wanting to know what their response was...or, they would post something and I would want to respond to them, either way, but I would definitely want to know what their response was and that happened lots. And I mean not to every post, but there was definite times when I was like “I can’t wait to see what they say”...	Acknowledging being drawn back to DB Talking about a couple students Striking a chord learning with others Posting and hoping for response  Wanting to see what others said Wanting to respond to others Feeling drawn to see response Feeling drawn to DB often Anticipating responses often

This careful, intensive scrutiny helped me stay close to data allowing it to drive analysis. For example, a 45-minute interview resulting in 23 pages of text yielded approximately 383 line by line codes. Because I am a novice researcher, all transcripts were first coded using initial, line by line coding to ground me in the process, provide practice and strengthen confirmation for seeing patterns and repetition emerge. After coding each transcript, writing a memo helped me identify themes that appeared and tentatively identify possible focused codes. An example follows.

**Table 3.4 Memo, Casey: Knowing versus Internalizing, 7/8/11.**

<b>Memo, Casey: Knowing versus Internalizing, 7/8/11</b>
<p>Today I listened to the recordings of 007's interview again...            There were several overlaps in this interview with Jordan's interview which are detailed in a previous memo. Like Jordan, Casey had interests in politics and political ideas prior to coming to this class...            She relayed some examples of how the course impacted her view of the nursing profession. Some codes in this area:</p> <p><b>Knowing on surface level, 007-5</b>            This referred to information she'd heard and learned in earlier courses about nursing being a profession and having learned about the many skills that nurses have. This is in contrast to:</p> <p><b>Internalizing nursing as a profession on a deeper level, 007-5</b>            ...I kind of realized that nursing is a profession, and that we...</p>

At this point, it was appropriate to use peer review and reliability checking to see if I was accurately coding what was reflected in data. Peer review through a critical friend provided this evaluation (Glesne, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Reliability checking during line by line coding was accomplished by having a peer education doctoral colleague read and code six pages of a participant's 20-page transcript. This colleague was selected because of her experience doing a study with similar design using coding with gerunds, her knowledge of learning, and the fact that she did not know these students in any way. Initial reliability was calculated using Miles and Huberman's technique (1994, pp. 64-65) at 81% prior to any discussion about codes. Discussion occurred until consensus was reached bringing us to 100% understanding of rationale for coding. A memo was written thoroughly describing this process with rationale. A portion of this memo with a table showing our areas of difference, rationale, and resolution is in Appendix G.

*Focused coding* was the next level of coding and involved "using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). This helped me categorize data. After I finished initial coding of the first

four interviews using the cyclical process identified at the start of this section, I copied coded transcripts and cut line by line codes with their data segments from transcripts and placed them on index cards. Hands-on clustering, sorting, and categorizing techniques were used to identify focused codes. Examining data in this way to sort and sift through commonalities, differences, and themes, pushed analysis along and helped me identify focused codes. Appendix H is an example illustrating how Casey's ideas in the initial line by line coding example provided earlier were further abstracted when I examined them in context of other participants' views. They were then raised to thematic-level codes and finally a focused code called 'experiencing synergy on DB.'

Like initial coding, developing focused codes *using gerunds* kept a focus on the process and action in participants' statements about learning. These coding processes were extremely intensive. The previous example of the 23-page transcript yielding 383 line by line codes was further reduced to about 55 focused codes. Focused coding then directed subsequent interview questions with participants to further confirm and extend the emerging concepts in the study. By being immersed in the data, first with initial and then focused coding, which categorically connected and organized the most important codes, trustworthiness that conceptual codes were not forced but instead *emerged from the data* was strengthened (Charmaz, 2006). Writing memos during this process was very important and is described next.

### Writing Memos

As mentioned in the previous section, I wrote memos interspersed with interviewing and coding processes. Writing progressively analytic memos is essential in analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This pushed me to raise codes to higher levels of abstraction



and categorization. Memo writing occurred during the entire research process enabling me to identify, clarify, question, connect, and try out ideas that emerged during coding. This process aided me in revealing patterns, assumptions, and relationships and helped me reconstruct what was happening in the data, leading to the emergent theory. The example that follows is a portion of one of the earliest memos I wrote in this study.

**Table 3.5 Portion of Early Memo on Interview Impressions.**

<b>Memo, Jordan: <i>Seeing politics as natural, as what is 7/1/11</i></b>
<p>...We were both a little stiff as the interview started...my first one, his perhaps being unsure of what would happen in the interview. We both relaxed as the interview progressed. Even when given permission to end, he still had things to say, important things.</p> <p>Overall impressions from the interview:</p> <p>1) Jordan came to class <b>being interested</b> and <b>feeling somewhat validated</b> in that his interests were not so foreign as he'd thought in coming to this discipline he'd elected to enter. In fact, he may actually be more prepared than many of the others in the class. He has <b>pre-existing interests</b> in politics and in current issues and more readily seems to see the connections to nursing than some of the other students...</p>

This memo helped me consider ideas I had not thought about prior to this interview. It got me thinking about the impact of students' pre-existing ideas on their learning in nursing courses. Specifically, I started wondering about participants' views of nursing and how that contributed to or constrained them coming into my class. This memo helped me become more open and to listen for meanings behind the words in subsequent interviews.

After doing another interview, I began comparing what I heard with previous ones, and an example follows.

**Table 3.6 Portion of Memo Showing Comparing and Questioning.**

<b>Memo, Casey: <i>Knowing versus Internalizing</i>, 7/8/11</b>
<p>...This segment of the interview helps to illustrate some insights from both Jordan and Casey's interviews. These two students had insights about nursing's potential in political processes, but in addition, the ideas from the course and that learning stimulated new insights about nursing, the profession.</p> <p>So, using Charmaz as a guide to interrogate the data, what process is happening here?</p> <p>Are there 2 processes at work? One, centered around becoming political or being on a Journey to Become Nurse Activists, or Journey to Become Political Nurses? And another centered on Engaging in own learning? Or is there a central process which occurs at the intersection of becoming political and engaging in learning? Or, is it one learning process....</p>

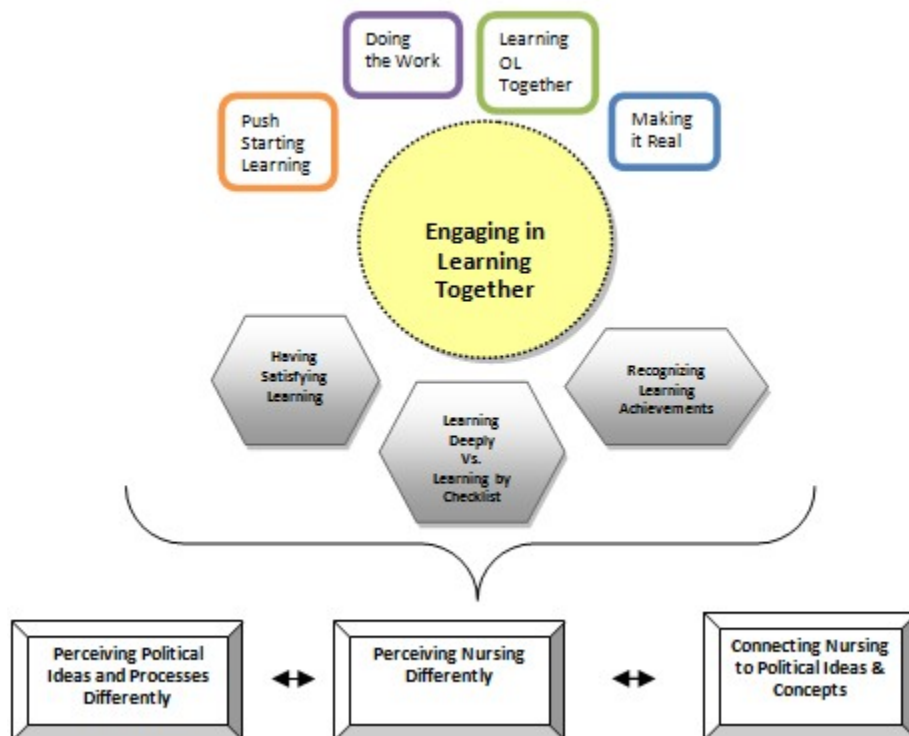
Even after just a few interviews, I speculated about learning processes that were starting to emerge. Memos helped me document initial impressions and then question and surface “glimmerings” about ideas and connections. They prevented me prematurely making conclusions by explicitly connecting method to my thinking. These memos directed me to further lines of questioning with participants. By writing memos first about early interviews and then later about processes that emerged between and across interviews, participants' processes of learning emerged.

As analysis progressed, categories were constantly compared, combined, and re-constructed. Categories were raised to higher levels of abstraction and links became apparent between categories. Charts, diagrams, and data displays were developed to visualize processes and move analysis forward (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The following data display is one example from many tables I constructed to help visualize codes and make my thinking more explicit during analysis.

**Table 3.7 Portion of Data Display for Making it Real: Connecting Current Issues to Learning.**

Focused Code	Line by Line Coding	Researcher Thoughts
Connecting Current Issues to Learning	Codes were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Finding information for Adv. Paper issue] made me feel less out of touch with current events 011-5</li> <li>• Looking at issue was good 005-2</li> <li>• Making sense of course ideas through examples 005-2</li> <li>• Searching for real health issues in politics 005-2</li> <li>• Connecting reading with current issues 005-3</li> <li>• Seeing what's happening now pulls it together 005-3</li> </ul>	As I look at this category...it could go into either Personalizing learning or Experiencing Political Processes as it connects to both...  ...it's clear that integrating current events and issues into the class was a mechanism that connected their learning to the real world and to political processes...  Because students often come to the class unaware of the many health issues...  ...talking about real issues makes the issues relevant and real to students...it takes it out of the realm of theory only, something just in a book to something that affects theirs and others' lives and health.  It also seems to re-connect them back with the real world outside of nursing... For some students like 011, 007 and 006, studying nursing is all-consuming...

By making these tables and constantly re-scrutinizing codes and categories, I gradually reduced overlap and consolidated categories. Appendix I shows the *early theoretical coding schema* that resulted after these analytical coding processes. Theoretical categories with theoretical and focused codes were identified, greatly reducing codes from the original thousands of line by line codes. I designed numerous graphic conceptions of the theoretical categories displaying interconnections. The figure below is an early version of Engaging in Learning Together, reflecting a fourth attempt to illustrate theoretical codes, categories, and connections.



**Figure 3.1** Early Graphic Depiction of Engaging in Learning Together

Writing memos and using data displays were critical analytical processes in analysis and continued through all stages of the study, including theoretical sampling, which is explained in the next section.

### Theoretical Sampling

Once I constructed categories of data, I did theoretical sampling to draw out, define, and develop the properties of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). As the tenth participant interview was completed, line by line codes repeated similar patterns. New data no longer emerged from participants. At this point, it was appropriate to do theoretical sampling because I was forming categories, beginning to see connections across categories, and identifying their properties. Theoretical sampling was done with

intent to develop and strengthen properties of categories, complete descriptions of concepts in the emerging theory, and to make a close fit between the data and the theory (Charmaz, 2006; Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011). This sampling was not done to represent a population or find negative cases. I re-read data from the last four interviews deliberately seeking evidence that contributed to the theoretical reach of the developing grounded theory. I reviewed line by line codes in these transcripts and re-coded larger data segments with relevant theoretical codes. I examined the re-coded segments to actively look for more data to further define and develop the strength of the theoretical ideas. An example of re-coded interview data follows.

**Table 3.8 Example of Re-coding Transcript for Theoretical Sampling.**

<b>Sidney</b>	<b>Initial Line by Line Coding</b>	<b>Re-coding with Theoretical Codes</b>
Um, honestly...I did wonder how it was going to link together. I've never been that much into politics and kind of steered clear of it...	Wondering how nursing and politics would connect	Preconceptions about Nursing & Politics as connected
	Avoiding and not into politics, steering clear	Preconceptions about Politics
	Not understanding political jargon	Preconceptions about Politics
Um, well I felt like there was just so much like political jargon that I didn't really even understand but...it kinda just bored me.	Feeling bored by politics	Preconceptions about Politics

While re-coding the last four participant transcripts, I continued to write memos and incorporate new information from re-coding into data displays for each of the main categories of the theory. I used inductive thinking to derive theoretical codes and categories from the data and deductive thinking to re-code and theoretically sample from participants' transcripts. This was the point where I also used *abductive thinking* to search

“for all possible theoretical explanations” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 104). A formal literature review was delayed until analysis provided direction to specific concepts and ideas. The literature was read, re-read, and sampled for conceptual ideas and research evidence related to the emerging theory and used to support and challenge the findings and significance of the study. These connections appeared in memos, and I penciled them onto data displays.

I benefitted from making a Conditional Relationship Guide (Scott, 2004) during this stage of the study. This matrix, developed by Scott (2004) and based on Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) original conditional/consequence matrix ideas, assisted me to ask questions of “what, when, where, why, how, and with what result or consequence” (Scott, 2004, p. 116) as I formed categories in the theory. Charmaz (2006) did not recommend the use of Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) conditional/consequence matrix because of concerns about forcing data rather than allowing its emergence. As a novice researcher, however, making the matrix assisted me to see categories, making their properties more distinct, and allowing visualization of the interplay between categories. Appendix J shows this matrix. I believe doing this after completing initial and focused coding when categories had already emerged decreased my chances of forcing data.

#### Member Checking with Participants

Near the end of this theoretical sampling process, it was appropriate to communicate with participants and get their input into the emerging theory of learning. A second contact with participants occurred approximately 3 months after the end of the course. Participants were asked via e-mail to respond to a draft summary of the grounded theory that emerged in the research and to answer brief questions about whether their

experience of learning in the course was reflected in the summary. They were given the option for e-mail, phone, or face-to-face response to the questions. An e-mail with the attached summary and questions to answer was sent to all fourteen participants about mid-August 2011 with reminder e-mails sent as needed to encourage response (Appendix K). Eleven (78.5%) students provided verification feedback through this process with all who responded saying the theory accurately reflected their experiences of learning (see table below). No changes were suggested.

**Table 3.9 Participant Verification Responses.**

Questions—Verification Contact (e-mail)	Participant Responses
Q1 Could you see your experience of the NURS 420 class portrayed in the theory about learning in the class?	Yes (11 of 14 responding, 78.5%) “Yes, those were the exact experiences I had”
Q2 Did the theory “ring true” according to your own experience? Does it make sense?	Yes (11 of 14 responding, 78.5%) “It was spot on actually.”
Q3 What suggestions, if any, do you have for me?	No suggestions (11 of 14 responding, 78.5%) “...[this course] made a subject that I have no interest in very interesting and not seem so daunting.”

I wanted all participants to provide input but the e-mailed review process coincided with the start of the next semester. Even with three e-mail reminders or participants seeing me in the hall and voluntarily saying they would respond, no further responses were received. I did not want to coerce participants so was satisfied with the responses I obtained.

#### Critical Friend Input

Peer critique of the draft grounded theory also occurred. Two nurse researcher colleagues provided this level of review. One colleague taught the same NURS 420 course, which used identical course objectives and was conducted in an online environment with senior nursing students. Both courses emphasized writing and

discussing with others to learn. Differences were that her students were already Registered Nurses (RN) returning for a bachelor's degree (BS), her course was fully online rather than blended online, and she and I are different as individuals and instructors. The second colleague directed this same online BS program for RNs, had experience doing grounded theory research, and was familiar with the NURS 420 course. Both colleagues provided valuable input contributing to slight re-organization of the visual of the grounded theory and verification of the overall impressions of the draft summary of the theory. They quizzed me about categories and conceptual links. The faculty with experience teaching the course reflected seeing changes similar to what I saw in her students' thinking about political ideas in her course.

My dissertation Chair and committee members were critical reviewers, providing valuable input throughout all phases of the study. Other colleagues and one former student who had taken this course in the past and was now in a graduate program served as informal peer reviewers and de-briefers. They facilitated my process as researcher by listening, letting me talk aloud, asking questions, and reflecting about what made sense (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003).

#### Course Documents and Communications

Course documents and course communications were used early in the study to help me identify questions, patterns, and ideas about learning for interviewing and writing memos. In theoretical sampling, they provided evidence for confirmation of concepts in the emergent grounded theory and examples of theoretical evidence. By examining course documents with theory processes of Push Starting Learning and Doing the Work in mind, I verified the presence of course organization and clarity described by



participants. The documents let me see *whether* and *how* corresponding course materials verified what participants described in interviews.

Course communications were also re-read during this stage and a data display helped me analyze information. A sample is provided in the display that follows.

**Table 3.10 Data Display of Course Communication Analysis.**

<b>Types of E-mailed Communications</b>	<b>Researcher Analysis and Thoughts</b>
<p><b>Total of 95 e-mails from participants</b> (I couldn't retrieve e-mails from system from mid January to Feb. 9). E-mails are from Feb. 9, 2011 through May 10, 2011</p>	<p>These largely reflect the category <b>Doing the Work</b>. E-mails from participants: <b>General questions about course</b> showing processes of clarifying understanding, seeking assistance, locating resources, getting further explanations... These show <b>Taking Charge</b> of learning... Specific questions about Advocacy Paper showing the above plus: Seeking draft assistance, demonstrating working hard to learn on AP Most e-mails returned same day or within 24 hours—verifies participants' impressions of <b>instructor engagement</b> through <b>feedback</b>.</p>
<p><b>Total of 10 e-mailed Announcements from me to whole class</b></p>	<p>E-mails demonstrate/verify <b>instructor behaviors of engagement</b>: Being proactive on known issues and questions Giving relevant info to all based on single student's question Giving feedback on OL performance Directing to resources or instructions</p>
<p><b>Total of 25 e-mails from graduate student writing assistant</b> about writing evaluation</p>	<p>Primary purpose: Communicating about evaluation of AP Clarifying AP writing process including our evaluation process Following and interpreting writing rubrics Guiding assistant in evaluation process and goals Encouraging and supporting TA Reminding of larger goal in learning Decreasing anxiety about grading</p>

E-mailed communications were quickly coded using theoretical categories and codes. They provided verification of participants' statements particularly in Doing the Work demonstrating engagement by taking charge of their own learning. Instructor behaviors of engagement in participants' learning were also verified. I was surprised how vividly I was struck by the respectful, energetic tone of e-mails, which reflected the same affective, positive emotional presence I felt during interviews and analyzing transcripts.

The power of triangulation became more real to me in doing this analysis of communications.

To summarize, theoretical sampling strengthened theoretical categories and codes and facilitated refinement of Engaging in Learning Together. This sampling led me to the final process of theoretical saturation described in the next section.

### Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation is the final analysis process in grounded theory research. Data collection and analysis results in no new contributing information, and it results in a complete description of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Wuest, 2007). Contrary to multiple interpretations of saturation in qualitative research, in grounded theory, saturation refers to the detailed emergence and construction of theoretical categories, which occurs when "...gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). As categories and theoretical properties emerged, I returned to the data and literature again and again to extend and complete theoretical development while working toward saturation even during writing this dissertation. Ideally, theoretical saturation should occur to fill out the defining properties of conceptual categories until no new dimensions appear (Charmaz, 2006; Coyne & Cowley, 2006). Both Charmaz (2006) and Coyne and Cowley (2006) suggest saturation may be difficult to achieve because research findings are tentative rather than absolute. They note that saturation may not really happen in a single study and multiple studies may be needed to test aspects of the theory. They suggest aiming for the "'best' that is achieved at a particular time" (Coyne & Cowley, 2006, p. 513). Because this study investigated a new area, undergraduate nursing

students' learning about political processes, study results may be viewed as the "best" obtained for this initial investigation, and confidence in reaching saturation may not be fully achieved until more study is done in future.

In the process of getting to theoretical saturation, the coding schema for the study was revised many times to get to higher levels of abstraction. Appendix L shows the **final coding schema** that resulted after these analytical processes. Using the previously given example of an average of 383 codes per interview multiplied by fourteen interviews, approximately *5262 line by line codes* were ultimately abstracted to *35 focused codes*, *fourteen theoretical codes*, and *six theoretical categories* to describe the *core category* of *Engaging in Learning Together*. Writing memos and data displays were critical analytical processes in my research as was receiving feedback from my Chair and committee members. Together, these data collection, preparation, and analytical processes contributed to establishing trustworthiness for this study.

In qualitative research, researcher reflexivity about the research process also contributes to study trustworthiness. Lichtmann (2011) explained reflexivity saying "it is concerned with identifying the interconnections among a researcher, the text, the participants being studied, and the larger world" (p. 288). In the next section, my reflexive thoughts are presented.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a process of reflective inquiry whereby the research process itself is examined for insight about methods, decisions, and biases (Glesne, 2006). It facilitates transparency in design, methods, analysis, and self-awareness. This study involved my beliefs and practices about teaching because of its focus on how participants' learned in

my policy course. I was obligated to carefully examine my responsibilities and goals as researcher and teacher.

I kept a research journal during the entire research process in a notebook. I jotted handwritten impressions and insights at every stage of the study, wrote about methodological details and/or changes, and mused about patterns, ideas, and connections. I read, re-read, and added to the journal over the course of the study and mined it for ideas, which contributed to memos, methods, context, and reflexivity. I used the journal to identify my assumptions, values, and beliefs in regard to teaching and learning, the research process and my relationship with participants. My conversations with my Chair contributed to my reflections. One of the themes that appeared was about power, which is explored in the next section.

### Power

My personal limits and abilities influence my interpretation and presentation of this research. I am limited by my biases, even with awareness and bracketing these during the research process (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2006). Limits include my own life, family needs, workload responsibilities, and subsequent limits on time for research and teaching. Biases are ingrained and unconscious; they surfaced in ways I did not recognize such as in how I named some codes. One such example was “structuring for success,” a code that described a process from the teachers’ point of view and was re-thought and re-named to “feeling successful with structure” after a meeting with my Chair. Another example of bias may be that I altered my way of teaching and interacting with students during spring 2011. Though the context changes from semester to semester due to student, teacher, the environment, and many factors, my NURS 420 course evaluations from prior and

subsequent semesters reflected a similarly high level of student satisfaction across semesters. Critical reviews from peers, colleagues, committee members, and repeated scrutiny have helped, but in the end my biases are still part of this interpretation. I have aimed to produce an interpretation that honors participants' intent and meaning as much as possible.

I was sensitized early in doing participants' interviews to listen very carefully not only to participants' words but the spaces between and the meaning underneath what they said. I was aware of the power imbalance between myself as teacher researcher and their roles as participants and students. One participant, Pat, had agreed to a telephone appointment and when I called her at the appointed time and asked if the time was still all right for the interview, she said "Yes, sure; I'm sitting in my car at Fred Meyer." We went back and forth a few times with me offering to re-schedule at a time more convenient for her and her saying it was fine. In my interview notes I wrote "...I sensed something, not hesitancy outright but [I] got some idea that she might want to really do it another time" despite her words. Finally, I suggested re-scheduling one more time and she agreed adding as an aside that she "...could go home and 'let her daughter into the house' saying she was in a wheelchair [with a broken leg] and would need assistance getting in." My interview notes said:

I was left with the impression, had I gone ahead with the interview, this participant's child may have been sitting there at the house with no assistance to get in on her own. I'm so glad I gave her several opportunities to re-schedule.

This interview sensitized me to the issue of power in student-faculty relationships and relationships with research participants. No matter how one tries to be sensitive to it, the power imbalance is still there. I continued to trust my intuition during communication

and interviews with participants, to re-word questions to give participants multiple chances to express their honest views, and to use alternate lines of questioning to give every opportunity for comfort in expressing their honest perspectives of learning in the course. I also asked participants if they wanted to continue to participate at every stage of the research. By doing these things, listening carefully and being genuinely present during interactions, I believe participants felt they could share their insights about learning and they would be taken seriously and respected.

Reflexive thought helped me become more aware of power imbalances between myself and participants during the entire research process. This awareness made me even more grateful for their participation in my study. It contributed to establishing trustworthiness and addressing limitations, which are discussed more fully in the following section.

## **Trustworthiness and Limitations**

### Establishing Trustworthiness and Integrity

Trustworthiness and integrity are critical to strong grounded theory research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 2006; Wuest, 2007). Charmaz (2006) identified credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness as criteria for evaluating grounded theory research. The following measures were taken to increase trustworthiness and were consistent with the overall intent of the study.

### Credibility

Establishing credibility means demonstrating justifiable, solid thinking processes using rich, meaningful data sources (Charmaz, 2006; McCann & Clark, 2003a, 2003b;

Mills et al., 2006; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1996). The primary data source, participants' interviews, provided space for participants to voice descriptive accounts of learning from their points of view that informed, validated, verified, and filled in gaps in my perception of student learning. I used interview notes, literature, course documents, and course communications to support and verify development of theoretical categories (Begley, 1996; Wuest, 2007). Input from critical friends challenged, critiqued, and confirmed coding reliability and emergent theory development. Member checks from participants contributed to and verified the theory and its categories. Critical review and feedback from my Chair and committee further contributed to and strengthened analytic clarity and presentation of findings.

Prolonged engagement (Charmaz, 2006; Geertz, 1973; Glesne, 2006) with data was demonstrated through repeated observations and reflection over an extended period of time—a 16-week long semester, a post-course period of approximately three months, and a year for writing this report. Close reading of participant transcripts with immersion through intensive, line by line coding increased my confidence in the credibility, confirmability, and completeness of analysis. Data sources resulted in rich, thick detail facilitating theoretical conceptualizing, categorizing, and support for inductive theory development. Analytic paths are traceable through a methods notebook, which includes a research journal.

### Originality

Demonstration of originality occurs when fresh insights are provided through findings and discussion of the how the study fits within higher education and the discipline of nursing. Sensitizing literature read and analyzed during the proposal stage

alerted me to the state of evidence on learning, civic engagement, and higher education, political advocacy in nursing, and online pedagogies of engagement used in nursing education. A formal literature review was delayed until data analysis revealed emerging patterns directing me to specific areas of literature. This literature framed the study's context and was used to analyze and interpret findings for their significance (Charmaz, 2006; Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011; Wright, 2007). Findings of the study contribute to an identified gap in nursing education, a lack of learning theory specific to nursing students' learning of political and policy concepts. Engaging in Learning Together is a fresh contribution to civic engagement learning in the nursing discipline.

### Resonance

Resonance occurs when the richness, meaning, and sensibility of what is studied is conveyed to participants and those familiar with the phenomena (Charmaz, 2006). Emerging data patterns were shared and explored with participants as interviews progressed. Participants' confirmation of experiences and meanings affirmed my emerging conceptualization of their learning during analysis. Participant's verification of the draft theory through comments such as "it was spot on actually" showed it "rang true" to their learning process. Critical friends commented on the theory's application to their own courses. Conversations with my Chair identified concepts and processes inherent in findings with application to both nursing and teacher education. Theoretical categories and linkages made sense.



### Usefulness

One component of usefulness is the pragmatic, practical application of findings in teaching and learning situations (Charmaz, 2006; Lichtman, 2011). I am already using findings in my own teaching, course, and setting. These are further described in Chapter Seven in the discussion and conclusions. Usefulness is also demonstrated through identifying the relevance and significance of this study's contributions to civic engagement learning in higher education and nursing education. Knowing how useful this study actually is must be somewhat delayed until it is reported to colleagues, however, two abstracts for presentation have already been accepted demonstrating interest in the topic. In summary, multiple strategies strengthened this study's integrity and trustworthiness demonstrating credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness in the findings and written report.

### Limitations

Limitations of the study include: 1) findings are based primarily on participants' interviews as the primary data source; 2) the sample is limited due to participants' homogeneity by gender and ethnicity as well as by sample size; 3) researcher and/or participant biases and perceptions of power impacts results; and 4) the context-specific nature of the research.

### Limited Data Sources

The primary data source for this study was participant interviews. Participants' voices and perceptions about their own learning were strengths of the study. However, additional data sources in addition to self-report would provide triangulatory evidence

and verification, which when added to participants' perceptions would strengthen the findings. I am currently on sabbatical leave conducting a study using participants' Bb transcripts to further define and extend the theoretical categories found in this study. Incorporating these new findings along with findings from this study should strengthen overall findings.

### Participant Characteristics

Participants in the sample were a fairly homogeneous group in terms of gender and ethnicity. The predominance of females in the study reflected the female majority in both the nursing program and state workforce. Most participants identified themselves as Caucasian with only one participant reporting an ethnic heritage other than this. Political engagement is impacted by both gender and ethnicity. Women tend to be less politically interested or involved than men, preferring volunteer activity over explicitly political activity (Portney et al., 2009). Young people from culturally diverse groups other than Caucasian often have fewer role models and opportunities to observe and participate in political activities (Lopez & Kiesa, 2009). Both women and culturally diverse students benefit when civic engagement is provided.

This does not mean that political education is not important for men. Because this study only had one male participant, it is not possible to draw any conclusions related to gender. Civic engagement research identifies young men as having greater political knowledge, interest, and activity levels than young women (Portney et al., 2009). However, it would be interesting to have both men's and women's perspectives about civic engagement learning in nursing to see if differences in perspectives emerge. It is possible that women may have learned more deeply in NURS 420 because they felt safer

admitting their lack of knowledge when there were fewer voices speaking out who had more experience than they had.

The sample size is limited to the fourteen participants. A larger sample may have added more diverse perspectives not only by adding male, cultural, and ethnic perspectives but may have also added voices of students who did not feel as positive or as engaged about NURS 420.

#### Research and/or Participant Biases and Power Discrepancies

Even though the study was designed to respect participants' rights and minimize chance of harm from participation (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2006), participants could still have felt uncomfortable or coerced in some way and not shared their honest impressions of the course, instructor, or their learning. Power discrepancies always exist between teachers and students; the imbalance cannot be eliminated entirely even when a study is conducted after a course is concluded as this one was. Numerous measures were taken to give participants every opportunity to decline to participate or to respond to questions at each stage of the research. I felt participants' responded honestly based on their statements matching their tone of voice, few inconsistencies in statements they made during interviews, and the consistency in how their statements matched with course activities and discussions as I remembered them during the course of the semester.

#### Applicability Limited to Specific or Similar Contexts

The nature of qualitative research makes study findings most relevant and applicable to my own course and context. Findings may be applicable to contexts with similar course, philosophical, pedagogical, and student characteristics. Qualitative

findings may be interpreted other than was intended depending on the interpretive lenses and perspectives of the readers.

### Other Ethical Considerations

The blended online component of the research merited particular safeguards for participants' privacy and security. Because this study specifically focused on participants' learning in a blended online environment, security precautions were taken that were consistent with international standards for research online (Bruckman, 2002; Charmaz, 2006; Ess & AoIR [Association of Internet Researchers] Researchers, 2002; Im & Chee, 2004; Mann & Stewart, 2000). Though NURS 420 students were not asked to participate in the research until the course was completed, it was appropriate to take measures during the course to increase privacy in online communication. Though security and privacy are increasingly protected online, no system can be 100% secure. Students using the Internet and Bb may have varied expectations of privacy while online with some thinking conversations are very private and others aware that communications may be seen by many. Students who use DBs may reveal information they would not ordinarily share during face-to-face conversation (Ess & AoIR, 2002; Im & Chee, 2004).

First, online discussions in Bb are routinely only available to course faculty and students enrolled in a course during the semester in which the course is taken. Course Bb sites are secure and require login access using a password. To enhance student privacy on Bb during NURS 420, I created separate group DBs for students' online class discussions. This gave access to students' own learning group's discussions but prevented viewing those of other groups. This reduced potential invasions of group and/or individual privacy. It was intended to increase feelings of safety in DBs for expressing

ideas or information of a private nature, which sometimes happens in the context of groups' learning. Students were informed of this level of privacy from the beginning of the course. The exception to these private group DBs was a whole class DB created for students to post weekly synopses of group activities and to access forums where they could ask questions and receive answers on major course assignments. This differentiation between private boards accessed by few and a whole class board accessed by many and is clearly defined from the start of the semester was consistent with standards for Internet user privacy (Bruckman, 2002; Ess & AoIR, 2002; Im & Chee, 2004).

Group norms were discussed and agreed upon by students at the beginning of the semester, re-visited as needed during the course, and upheld by students and faculty as part of the course grade. These norms included respect for what was shared by individuals and agreement to keep personal information confidential and not to share it with others outside learning groups. At the conclusion of spring semester 2011, the NURS 420 class in the Bb system was no longer available to students who were in the course but was accessible to me as teacher researcher.

Many measures contributed to strengthen the study's trustworthiness and integrity. Study limitations were identified, and special precautions for research involving the Internet were taken to enhance participants' privacy and security in that environment.

### Summary of Methods

The research aims and methods of this study were consistent with constructivist grounded theory tradition (Charmaz, 2006). The context was described and data collection and analysis procedures explained. Measures to strengthen the study's integrity

and trustworthiness were presented. Analysis of data led to a substantive theory of learning, Engaging in Learning Together, which emerged during the research. This theory and study findings are presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Chapter Four provides the overview of Engaging in Learning Together and details findings for three learning processes, Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, and Making it Real. Chapter Five presents participants' learning through discussion in a process called Learning Online Together and a second process, Learning Deeply. Chapter Six illustrates participants' process of Becoming Political.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ENGAGING IN LEARNING TOGETHER

The major finding in this study was a substantive theory of learning, Engaging in Learning Together. In this chapter, an overview of the theory and its major theoretical processes and interconnections are presented. Then, three of these processes, Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, and Making it Real are described and illustrated with supporting evidence.

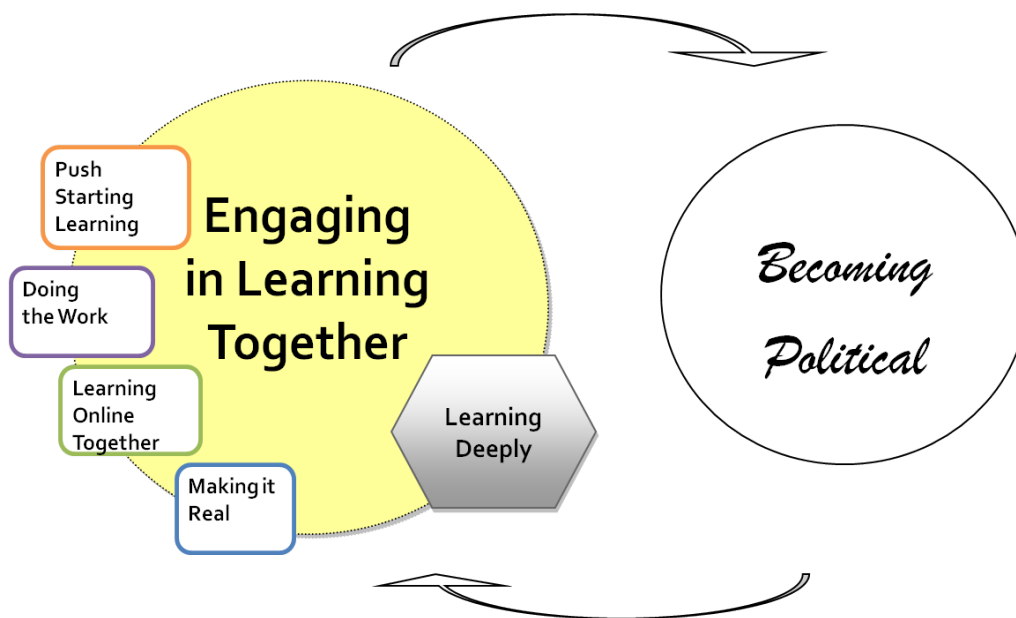
### **Theoretical Overview of Engaging in Learning Together**

As a result of taking NURS 420, participants constructed meaningful understanding about political processes, the profession of nursing, and the idea of nursing being connected to politics. At course beginning, eight (57%) participants described themselves as disinterested in politics and political processes and reported feelings of being nervous or “surrendering” themselves to the complete unknown. Six (43%) identified themselves as having prior interests in political ideas and being intrigued by the course from its start. By the end of the course, all related changes in their understanding of participation in political processes and their perspectives of nursing and nursing’s current and potential involvement in political processes and policy making.

The central questions of this study revolved around *how* participants arrived at these changes from beginning to end of the course? Their perceptions of what happened in the course of their learning yielded a conceptual framework of learning. *Engaging in Learning Together* emerged as the core category in this research. Four primary processes

were involved: *Push Starting Learning*, *Doing the Work*, *Learning Online Together*, and *Making it Real*. Through these processes of Engaging in Learning Together, participants created new understandings, leading to becoming more politically aware professionals.

Participating in these four processes resulted in *Learning Deeply* for most participants. Learning Deeply contrasted with “learning by checklist” as participants compared other learning and program experiences with their experiences in NURS 420. By course end, participants started a journey of *Becoming Political*. Figure 4.1 depicts the theory of Engaging in Learning Together.



**Figure 4.1** Visual Depiction of Engaging in Learning Together

Through the four processes on the left side of Figure 4.1, participants constructed a new understanding of the political ideas in the course, the nursing profession, and how they could integrate political ideas and practices into their evolving nursing practice. This



process was not linear and did not occur for all participants at the same time. Course design and structure created opportunities for them to engage in ideas, discussions, and activities; participants became increasingly interested and intrigued by these and differing perspectives of their learning group members and the instructor.

Through discussion with peers and the instructor, involvement in reading and writing, and experiencing political activities that made learning personally real, participants learned deeply. Learning Deeply is positioned at center left on Figure 4.1. This learning happened during the course as well as was viewed by participants as an outcome of course learning. A reciprocal, often synergistic effect created a learning spiral whereby participants were both pushed and drawn to actively engage in their learning. As they began to learn, their interest compelled them to further engage in learning to create meaning from political ideas in relation to nursing and themselves. The left side of the model represents processes of how participants learned. The right side represents what changed in participants' learning. Three processes of participants' learning, Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, and Making it Real are described and supported with evidence in the remainder of this chapter.

### **Push Starting Learning**

I've taken several online classes before and the way that it was structured and set up made it so that it wasn't like a free ride. The structure made it so that students knew they were going to have to put some effort into it, and because of that, it was kind of like the little push start for us to engage in our own learning...  
(Casey)

In my experience, I've heard the term "push start" to mean priming a motor for faster, easier start-up. Getting a balky lawn mower or sluggish car engine ready for action

by physically running alongside it while pushing it to move gears and pistons somehow enabled ignition and got the motor humming. While students are obviously not balky or sluggish machines, most in our nursing program were not excited to have a political course requirement in their senior year. The analogy of “push starting” applied here in that many participants were nervous and leery of politics, openly sharing their lack of interest and knowledge at the start of the course.

Much is still unknown about engaged learning. Engagement is a process but also seems to be a pre-cursor to learning (Axelson & Flick, 2010; Bowen, 2005; Kuh, 2003). One of this study’s sub-questions was “what course activities facilitate or constrain” participants’ sense-making of civic engagement concepts. All participants said course structure and design was a major contributor to their engagement and learning. Their reflections helped identify what attracted their attention and directed it toward course learning goals even when they might not have been particularly interested in political ideas at the course outset.

Push Starting Learning is defined as the promotive course structure, processes, and expectations that mobilized participants to take responsibility for learning, accelerated immersion in content and fostered active involvement in the course. Three predominant properties of Push Starting Learning are detailed in this chapter. These are: using structure for support, taking charge, and rising to expectations.

### Using Structure for Support

#### Satisfying Structure and Design

Participants were asked what helped and/or hindered their learning in the course. All participants (100%) felt the satisfying structure and design provided a framework that

helped them learn. Higher levels of student satisfaction are associated with greater engagement in learning (Scheiner, 2010a). Student satisfaction with online learning is also impacted more than in live classes by the clarity of course organization, design, and materials (Billings et al., 2001; Kelly et al., 2007; Mancuso-Murphy, 2007). Organization and clarity contributed to participants' satisfaction. Jordan said:

The class was very well organized and instructions to us were very clear and easy to find each week. There was a pamphlet...of 6 pages of 'this is what you're doing this week'. All of that was a gold mine. Without that stuff or... being less organized, it would be easy to get lost.

Jesse agreed and further identified how structure supported her learning process "...[there is] a short, basically lecture to start us out when we're online...then to the readings...really think about the [discussion] questions, and research[ing] those questions is...really important." She added "[This] makes the class be very successful in what you ...take from it and gain from it." The framework provided boundaries and pathways for success.

Having course topics chunked into "bite-sized" topics aided learning. Pat said "...[one] week we needed to learn about...how a bill gets made, going to the Capitol building. It was manageable... every week there was at least one new thing to learn, so I just really liked how that was set up." Kelly commented "I just really appreciate...taking something that seemed so... foreign and overwhelming...and breaking it down into bite-sized pieces and making it like 'ok...I don't have to be a political science major to understand what's going on'." Bite-sized learning made topics understandable, provided opportunities to discuss, clarify, and process information, identify examples, and apply topical ideas to nursing each week.

All participants (100%) were satisfied with the blended course delivery and specifically identified what they liked. Robin's view was reflective of others, many of whom had taken fully online but not blended online courses:

[I]t was my first experience doing an online hybrid class and it was extremely beneficial-- the way [it was] taught...and the way that it was laid out. At first, [I] was extremely nervous to go into—I felt like it was so overwhelming...what's required and...now I wish more of our classes could be like this.

Specifically, participants appreciated the ability to get on with activities without having to sit and listen to faculty lectures. “You could get on with the discussion and the actual meat of...the topic that week versus spending hours and hours reading or listening...to lectures” said Kelly. She had freedom and choice selecting readings, and the materials and design helped her stay focused on the week's concepts without extra “busywork.” Sidney liked the variety of course materials, did not find them overly lengthy, and didn't miss lectures.

Other reasons participants liked the blended format included having flexibility and convenience. “I thought that it was...conducive, particularly to working in clinical [labs]” said Kelly. Pat reflected “...accessing the information...is a biggie for me, when it's convenient for me...you spend time with your family and you get everybody ready for bed.” She added “then you get time to focus on what you need to focus on.” Participants also liked having the mix of online and live class days. “[I]t was nice to come back to the class and see everybody and interact as a group,” said Robin.

### Knowing Expectations

In addition to satisfying structure and organization, participants said they knew expectations in the course. Jordan described a discussion with a discussion board (DB) learning group member about the number of postings required each week. "...I was like, 'here's your base criteria [referring to class participation guidelines, discussion assignment], and that's all you have to do and you'll be fine'." It was clear he knew guidelines, how to use the rubric, and could help another group member understand. Having explicit criteria helped participants help each other decreasing reliance on the instructor. Clear expectations guided and boosted acceptance of their responsibility for learning. His knowing that expectation also conveyed the norm of accepting responsibility for knowing to the other student.

Lee relayed how DB structure and knowing expectations worked together to positively influence her learning: "Well, it required me to be more involved...[it] was good because it wasn't just me...we were required to respond to other people's postings ...and so, I could see what other people were getting out of the readings and the assignments." She added "the assignments and the topics for discussion for the week always required you to read what you really needed to read." Taylor confirmed Lee's ideas. "I really liked...how the whole thing was set up—especially for an online class...where we had one thing that was due one time during the week but it was a continuous thing throughout the week where we had multiple posts...and each activity...we had...to tie in assigned readings as well as outside sources." She showed understanding not only of the posting requirements but about quality and involvement on

the DB, which was important in setting the tone and expectation for substantive learning to occur in DBs.

### Decreasing Procrastination

Structure and design decreased procrastination for some participants. They were realists who identified what would have happened if there had been less structure in the course. Terry thought interaction and effort in the DB would have been different if students had not known faculty would participate, “I think people would have slacked off a little bit more...not knowing if [the instructor was] reading or not...or looking at ‘oh yes, this person posted, this person posted’.”

Taylor showed self-awareness in knowing the realities of her own and others’ tendency to procrastinate if structure was not present to move them forward in their learning.

I’ve struggled with online classes in the past just because I have a tendency to procrastinate, but with how it was set up...you really couldn’t do that because you had to post on multiple days and be referring back to Bb...so it was an on-going process throughout the week And I think that helped a lot...with learning the concepts of the course because you weren’t just looking at it once a week—you were continuously looking at it throughout the week, referring back to the readings and then...doing the online research and responding to your peers. And so....I actually got a lot out of the online version of this particular class.

She thought other courses she had taken in the past were “a lot less structured” and the expectations and requirements in NURS 420 made it “less easy to get by.”

### Taking Charge

Having choices positively influenced participants’ learning because it increased their control over when, where, and how learning happened and assisted them to manage

learning in context of their personal needs. Ultimately, choices contributed to participants' taking charge of their learning. Schreiner (2010b) studied college students' learning and named taking control of learning as *psychological engagement*, which characterized students who thrived academically.

### Having Control

Choice was good for participants' learning, and they gave a variety of reasons why this was so. Reasons included having freedom and independence (Kelly), deciding how to organize time (Robin), having flexibility (Pat), choosing own readings (Robin), and following passions (Casey). All of these reasons were encapsulated in *having control* over and taking charge of their learning. Some choices, like those just listed, were made within the course. Having control also extended to the choice of deciding whether to enroll in the blended course section.

Chris had two children under the age of four and expected to deliver her third child during the semester. She said "I think it's really important to have that option [blended class section]." In fact, taking the live class "...just wasn't an option for me" in light of her personal health and family needs during the semester. Another participant, Robin, had a newly-diagnosed, serious health issue that arose just prior to the semester. It required her to travel back and forth from school to her home state for emotional support and health care. She said taking the blended section "...made it easier for me in my circumstances because I could go home and still be a part of the class." For both, having the choice of blended and live options meant uninterrupted progression in the program despite having important personal health and family needs during their senior year.

Robin gave details about what controlling her learning meant for her. “I was able to make my own schedule—what am I going to read, what am I going to post, what am I going to respond. And that was huge for me...having my own independence to do things instead of having a set schedule with you [set by teacher] on when things are due.”

Robin’s view was interesting because there were actually several deadlines pre-determined in the course for major course assignments, and weekly online class discussions were open for one week extending from Wednesday to the subsequent Wednesday. Robin went on “Yeah, there were some schedules but...most of it was us and when we could get things done. And, we came together as a group and decided when our deadlines were gonna be. That was kind of huge for me this semester.” Evidently, some structure, such as project deadlines, fell within participants’ expectations for the course and was beneficial in terms of knowing what was expected and when, but still allowed much of the “how to get there” to participants who saw it as increasing their autonomy and control of learning as individuals and in DB groups.

### Choosing Purposefully

One facet of taking charge was choosing activities purposefully to meet personal learning needs. Pat shared she chose web resources to help her remember basic civics information and have a little fun “...I felt like a little kid watching how the bill...becomes a law on the *Schoolhouse Rock* again [laughs].” Jordan identified his way of using faculty essays and choosing resources to fit his learning style, needs, and interests:

[I]t was fun... ‘this is your lessons for the week, here’s some links to go look at’...that allowed me to select what I want... and what I don’t want to look at...then I open the next link ‘Oh, that’s something new to me; I better read this.’



He chose from a smorgasbord of resources to meet his needs and worked at a pace he controlled.

Participants used choice to explore topics and passions of interest. This was done as part of weekly class discussions as well as in choosing topics for the Advocacy Paper and/or political meetings to attend. Casey said "...we were kind of given free rein to look at sources, look at articles or whatever...there was opportunity to explore things that were maybe not... highlighted in the course if you wanted to." Chris chose her Advocacy Paper topic for its relevance to herself and her children. But she might not have found the topic had she not been "forced" through weekly class discussions and requirements. For her, it was paradoxically "not having, yet having choice," which was ultimately good for her.

She said:

I don't normally read the news [laughs]...and so, to be forced into doing that we got very...interested in different things that were going on...school lunch programs...it's not something that I ever thought about looking into before but definitely...as a nurse I could help make changes...That's always gonna be most important, the things that affect you directly, you know.

Having choices within a structure that prescribed doing something one routinely would not choose to do, such as watching the news, made her chosen paper topic more palatable and relevant, ultimately helping her to connect her life with political decisions.

### Rising to Expectations

Participants felt there were high expectations in the class from the instructor, peers, and themselves. Knowing the instructor and peers were reading their work, decreasing procrastination, and meeting personal learning goals/needs were components of rising to expectations and contributed to participants' engagement in their learning.

### Knowing Instructor and Peers Reading Their Work

Participants identified that knowing the instructor would be reading and participating in their course activities prompted them to engage in their learning. They felt compelled to “do better,” working up to the instructor’s high expectations and to demonstrate learning by knowing she was involved in the course and DB. Sidney said “...when you know that someone’s reading and paying attention, I feel like you try a little bit harder and make sure you read a little bit more.” Terry said “I think, your responses [on DB], kind of made us all go ‘OK, we need to keep up with this, we need to keep going’.” Instructor presence spurred them to put good effort into their activities. Leslie felt motivated by the instructor to improve her writing while in the course. She explained “Because I’m not very strong in writing and...all the critique, I really just took it all in and wanted to just do really good... it made me really like, work hard for you and for [this] class.”

Knowing peers were reading their work was also a motivator for engaging in learning. Being required to post their homework for peers to read and respond to on the DB impacted how participants invested in learning. Robin identified the DB and posting for peers as a strong motivator for her and an important way to learn political ideas in the class. She sized up my teaching style early in the course saying I “...had more of an interaction” with my students, which alerted her that she might need to stay on her toes. But she was even more motivated by her peers because “you [refers to herself] don’t really want to present knowledge that you just made up whereas sometimes ...just being honest here [laughs a little], sometimes it’s easy when you think your teacher is gonna be the only one looking at it... to kind of fluff things.” She went on to explain “...because

you're interacting with 5-6 other students on a weekly basis, you really want to make sure that what you're saying is actually valid, and actually had points." In Robin's previous experience in classes, it was easier to write or present information to faculty that might not be totally accurate or complete and still receive acceptable grades or scores on the assignment. But for her, it was more important to present herself as knowledgeable and having valid information for her peer group. Casey shared something of the same sentiment:

"...you don't want to sound like an idiot to your peers, so you know you have to do the reading and you have to understand the content to be able to answer the question [on DB]...it's just like an incentive for you to really read your material and critically think about it...I wouldn't want to look like a slacker on it."

Kelly felt motivated by sharing with her peers in her DB but for a different reason. "Gosh, I feel like, you know, the brown shoe in the tuxedo world here...I gotta step it up a little bit [laughs]." For her, the DB was like playing tennis with an expert tennis player—it made her want to "play up" to the better player's level. "...[T]hey would just be such beautiful postings that oohh, made me want to...do [an] even better job...some very smart ladies in our class—just amazing!" Sharing with her peers resulted in a deeper appreciation of her classmates and made her want her own contributions to be equally as meaningful.

Participants said they and their DB learning groups adhered to course expectations but went beyond them in discussions. Kelly said "...[we had a] pretty high bar...you know, which was a good thing." Lee stated "everyone...put in a great deal of effort through the discussions and it was really successful." And Casey said her group went beyond their established norms, "we have to be responsible, this is what we're

going to do and we all just kind of excelled at that, and...then we went above and beyond that.” Discussion boards provided for the most immediate learning reinforcement, particularly in the early weeks before other course projects were due.

Knowing the instructor and peers were reading their work prompted and motivated participants to work hard. They did not want to appear ignorant about topics in front of one another and wanted to contribute in substantial, valid ways in the DB and other activities. Responding to self, peer, and faculty expectations for high performance produced results that could be felt and seen. Participants found they were doing well in the course, and knowing this led to continuing positive behaviors and actually wanting to do more.

#### Meeting Personal Learning Needs/Goals

Because some participants had high expectations for themselves, meeting a personal learning need or goal also contributed to rising to expectations. For some like Jordan, the goal was longer-term and related to his career goal of impacting the health system at a larger system level: “I’m also hoping to, once I’ve been there long enough and gain some credibility and respect, to actually start to influence the policies that are going on inside the big box [pointing toward the large medical center].” For him, course ideas on policy and politics helped him connect his learning to his preferred future in nursing. “[M]any of those things [course ideas] were the tools that are needed to do exactly what I’m talking about...[what] I want to do.”

Other participants had more short-term, immediate personal learning needs. Finding learning was “interesting and worthwhile” (Jesse), “engaging” rather than boring (Casey), and having “some standout topics” (Pat) were all ways participants found their

personal needs met through the course. Taylor said “It was definitely very worthwhile...and something I hadn’t thought about so it’s always good to learn... learn new things and kind of open your eyes to different you know, horizons.” Having topics of interest and finding worth helped these participants get engaged initially and stay invested. Feeling like they were starting to get something in return for their investment by meeting some personal learning need or goal contributed to the environment of high expectations.

In summary, using structure for support, taking charge, and rising to expectations helped motivate participants to engage more quickly and deeply in their learning. These processes fostered immersion in course concepts and helped move them past initial apprehensions. Push Starting Learning started participants’ process of making sense of policy making and political advocacy. Push Starting directly impacted another key learning process, Doing the Work, which follows in the next section.

### **Doing the Work**

I really felt good about the way... it [was] set up...It was a lot of detailed work, but it was good because it made me read and it made me understand the concepts.  
(Kim)

Doing the Work was a process that emerged from participants’ responses to questions about what helped or hindered their learning and what turning points or transformational moments occurred in their learning in NURS 420. This process resulted in participants seeing connections and getting reinforcement as they began to see how politics intertwined with nursing as well as knowing they improved in finding resources, being persuasive, strengthening writing, and participating in political processes.

Scheiner's (2010b) study of college students identified both engaged learning and academic determination as necessary for thriving in learning. *Academic determination* consisted of students' attitudes and behaviors that helped them to persist and reach their academic goals. It involved investing time and energy, being focused, and controlling one's process of learning.

Doing the Work overlaps with Push Starting Learning in that course structure and design prescribed certain actions and activities in the course. Doing the Work, however, focuses on how participants accomplished reading and writing activities and how these impacted their learning. Interacting together in DBs was definitely seen by participants as part of the meaningful work of the class. However, DB interaction was complex and multidimensional and because of this it is intentionally not included in Doing the Work but is addressed instead in Chapter Five in the process of Learning Online Together.

Doing the Work is putting forth time and effort both within and outside of class to do the work for NURS 420. This required mental and physical efforts on the part of participants as well as a positive commitment of spirit and energy in the process of learning. Three properties of this process included opening up to learning, getting into reading and writing, and seeing connections. Each of these properties is described and illustrated in the following sections.

### Opening Up to Learning

Eight (57%) participants were nervous or anxious about class at its outset because politics was scary, distasteful, or unknown to them. Six (43%) described themselves as liking politics or being excited about having the class. For all participants, however, the connection of nursing and politics was completely foreign. Leslie said "I don't know

much about politics in general and especially pertaining to nursing. I was having a hard time wrapping around what we were going to be doing and learning about [laughs].” Kim stated, “I was nervous and a little leery because I’ve never been a big part of the political process. I felt I was kind of coming into the class with my hands in the air going, ‘I didn’t know what we would be doing’.”

As they got into the work of the course, Leslie and Kim began to feel more confident and less anxious. Leslie described how the early weeks’ activities impacted her “...just hearing from other students and...all the different writes and stuff that we had to do... and it gave me more interest in wanting to know more about nursing politics.” This interest helped her accept the need to keep working. Kim said “it was probably about...the 2<sup>nd</sup> week I started to understand as I... read the book, it became clearer...and then I think when we actually attended class, that was really helpful, too.” Weekly reading, homework, and participation in the DB contributed to learning engagement in the course spurring interest and involvement in a dynamic way. Having to complete assignments that required physical tasks, mental work, and commitment helped dissipate anxiety and generate interest. As participants engaged with course ideas, requirements, each other, and the instructor, they seemed to gain confidence in their abilities to learn, which made it easier to accept the level of work required.

The phrase “opening my eyes” was used frequently during interviews to indicate new insights as a result of participating in activities. Sidney said “...early on...I went to the meeting at the Capitol building for...the K-12 education [legislative hearings]...And that really actually *opened my eyes*.” Kim noted “...for me, [having an “aha” moment] it was actually going to the [State] house meetings. And understanding the process of

politics. I had really no clue up until this class, how it worked... It really was an *eye opening experience* for me.” Participants often spoke of “different horizons” (Taylor), and having “horizons broadened” (Jan), as they progressed in the class. Some equated this with a sudden insight, an “aha” moment in learning; others reported a gradual process of new understanding about political ideas and nursing as they opened up to learning.

### Getting into Reading and Writing

Another facet of Doing the Work was getting into reading and writing. Participants (71%) identified required text reading as meaningful to their work in the course. In addition, requiring use of concepts from reading in DB homework posts, inclusion of text use in Class Participation evaluation rubrics, and instructor interaction in DBs resulted in participants doing more reading than they did for other classes where that kind of structure and follow up was not included. Hobson (2004) summarized the research on college students’ reading saying only 20-30% of students’ read to fulfill assignment requirements resulting in about 70-80% who have not read. Research from the NSSE and others identified students’ reading as an important contributor to engaged learning (Kuh, 2003; Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010).

Two course texts were chosen for different purposes. *Becoming Influential* by Sullivan (2004) addressed the idea of nurses becoming influential—conceptually key to nurses’ participation in political and policy making processes. By addressing this in a pragmatic and direct way, Sullivan (2004) spoke directly and personally to each student. This complimented the instructor’s purpose and intent in the course. The second text for the course was Mason, Leavitt, & Chaffee’s (2007) *Policy & Politics in Nursing and*



*Health Care*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. It was selected for its complete explanations and application of political processes to nursing and featured basic political process description and resources, described public and private policy making, and included specific examples of nurses acting in political and policy realms.

### Using Reading to Learn

Participants approved of Sullivan's (2004) text. Their descriptions of the book included: "...yeah, it's such a gem...I'm not selling this one back, this is great" (Kelly); "I think the first thing that really caught my attention [in the course] honestly, was the Sullivan book...it's an excellent resource" (Taylor). Details on how this text supported participants' learning included: "It was...real time, real life...you know, real situations that happen at work" (Pat); "...it kinda had a little bit of attitude and an edge to it" (Robin); "...it was just...practical" (Sidney); "I just...left each chapter feeling...like I could do so much more...as a nurse" (Terry). In fact, Terry contacted her sister in another nursing program in another state and "made her go buy a copy." Having a readable, concise, and interesting text like *Becoming Influential* helped capture participants' attention and engaged them early in course ideas.

It was clear the text by Mason et al. (2007) was viewed by participants as a "textbook" not having the qualities of conciseness and readability participants found in Sullivan (2004). It was complementary providing different and specific material on politics and policy making which was needed by participants. "[Mason et al.] had a lot of good information...I got a good picture of how things are organized and what happens in the process of policy making" said Lee. Jesse thought "...having the different... stories behind each chapter [Mason, *Spotlights*]...those were very, very helpful." Sidney liked

the *Vignettes* (Mason et al., 2007): “I liked how you suggested reading those...it kind of made it real... how politics are involved...with nursing.”

Participants’ descriptions of texts were consistent with the use envisioned by the instructor. The texts provided a strong foundation for participants’ knowledge and when combined with requirements to read (Appendices B-D) and evaluation of the use of the reading (Appendix E), they provided a successful means for participants to engage and learn. As participants talked about their use of reading for this course, some put it in context of reading done for other courses in the program admitting they themselves or other students did not always read texts. Pat commented “...really, the underground was that everybody really liked the Sullivan book. A lot of people that I talked to said that was [laughs] ‘one of the only textbooks we read this semester [laughs]’.” Kim reiterated her thoughts about course requirements for reading “...it’s a lot of tedious work, but it’s good because it really makes you read and understand what you’re learning. Because otherwise, the truth of it is, a lot of people just don’t read it...you know?”

Participants cited examples of using additional links and course resources to aid their learning. Most of these were supplemental rather than required. Participants chose links based on their learning needs, interests, and time. Lee admitted to having time constraints, “I probably honestly...looked at about half of them.” She found it easier to look at extra materials if they were posted early in the week and more difficult to spend time on links if they were posted later in a given week. Terry found the Political Astuteness Inventory (PAI) (Clark, 1984), a self-rating tool for students to score their personal political knowledge and activities, significant in identifying her political knowledge gaps. “[I]t’s good...to kind of give people a baseline of where they are and

where they can go,” she said. Others used internet links (Casey), songs (Jan), and video clips (Sidney) to extend their learning.

Having the right texts to read for assignments made a difference in learning by piquing participants’ interest. This was validated through comments and descriptions of how they used course texts. Their graded weekly homework content, evaluative feedback from the instructor, and overall grades for Class Participation demonstrated they seemed to read required materials for class, and, in addition, sometimes read more than was required as they sought other ways to support their learning.

### Using Writing to Learn

Participants specifically identified writing as a means of engaging their thinking and learning in the course. Course projects like the Advocacy paper and the Newsletter Assignment required writing in specific genres, and they identified writing for these projects as influences on their learning.

Participants thought writing helped their learning in various ways. Some described the weekly homework they had to write and post on the DBs. Jordan said “being able to put my opinion in writing so it’s not being misinterpreted” helped him feel more secure and confident writing and posting online. Taylor said, “You also learn how to, with the discussion board, really communicate through writing...you have to be diplomatic about things. You have to make sure you’re not being...rude to other people.” She learned how to be more specific and attend to the tone of her messages. In addition, the prolonged practice of writing throughout the semester impacted Leslie’s learning, “...the writing, definitely, it helped my writing skills all semester. I could see myself growing...and by now I’m like, ‘ok, I should be able to write anything’ you know?” Jesse

admitted to a couple of times when overlapping writing assignments contributed to her stress, “that part was a little bit overwhelming,” and suggested assignments be examined at those times to reduce the load.

Kelly thought the variety of writing genres required for course assignments made learning more enjoyable. For the Newsletter Assignment, participants attended policy meetings and then wrote news articles for their learning group’s electronic policy newsletter. She said “...it’s kind of fun to write in an article format and it wasn’t an easy thing to do cause it’s not something that...we normally do but it was trying to...present it for your peers...more so than just a regular paper.” No single reason captured how writing impacted participants’ learning.

Students in NURS 420 were required to choose a real health or nursing policy topic and persuasively present a policy change in a concise paper to a policymaker involved in making decisions about the policy issue. Policy issues could be organizational, workplace, or governmental. Though students were not required to actually send the Advocacy paper to the policymaker, the assignment was constructed to be consistent with how nursing professionals might provide background evidence and persuasive communication on real health and nursing policy issues. The goals were for these baccalaureate-prepared, soon-to-be nursing professionals to become more familiar with nursing and health policy issues, to learn how to select and use appropriate evidence, and to make their views known through persuasive, effective, written communication to policy makers.

Participants (78.5%) identified that the Advocacy paper was meaningful for their learning in the course. The Advocacy paper was important because the writing process

itself helped participants practice and develop thinking and communication skills. The following table shows specific skills and processes participants learned through writing the Advocacy paper.

**Table 4.1 How Advocacy Paper Aided Participants' Learning**

<b>Learning Skill or Process</b>	<b>Illustrative Participant Quote</b>
Writing to policy maker	...the paper to me is doing research...on a topic and...actually going through the process of how we <i>would</i> contact a legislator, what we would do for the whole process...but actually learning what type of format you use to contact them...the language you use, and that sort of thing (Lee).
Thinking deeply about issue	...just going through the process of... identifying current issues that were related to nursing...and then eventually picking out our Advocacy [Paper] topic and you took it, like, step by step...(Kelly).
Finding and using sources	There was the Advocacy paper...and then there was the newsletters...but all of those forced me to really get a lot better at research and finding primary research, understanding the difference between primary and secondary [sources]...(Jordan).
Developing written voice	... it's [AP] served me in so many ways...having that process of researching something and finding the sources as well as my writing skills and that sort of thing...(Casey).
Being clear and specific	...we had to take a strong stance, we needed to ask for something specifically and be very clear about how we were asking...what change we wanted (Chris).
Being persuasive	...and then you need to know, probably, what your opponent's gonna say...And, what you're gonna say back...to try and be convincing (Chris).

Participants identified a variety of skills learned from doing writing in the course which they thought would help them in future courses. The Advocacy paper in particular, provided participants with ways to improve their evidence and source use, strengthen communication and persuasion skills, and use writing formats. Writing genres that were authentically real to policy work for nurses kept participants interested and engaged in writing processes. Participants' acknowledged the amount of work it took for them to do the writing for the course while also seeing a variety of benefits for their learning.

Processes in Push Starting Learning immersed participants in their course learning. Doing the Work helped them open up to course ideas and invest in the academic

work and skills of reading and writing. In addition to the processes just described, participants also identified experiential learning through political activities as important for their learning in NURS 420. Making it Real is described in the section that follows.

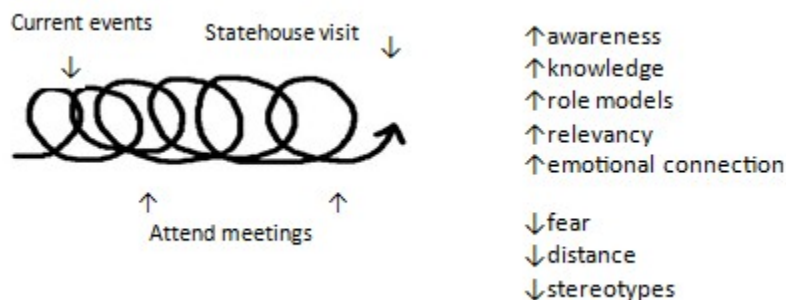
### **Making it Real**

[Y]ou know, you hear people talk about we're trying to change this or put this policy into effect and I really didn't understand what they [nurses at her workplace] were doing or why they were doing it and now I do; so it's kind of cool to see the process that they go through and how hard they work. (Kim)

One of the processes involved in Engaging in Learning Together was Making it Real. This process was a distinctive and important way in which participants made sense of political and policy concepts in relation to the discipline of nursing. Real world, experiential learning was a feature of all successful civic engagement programs in the literature. Having classroom-based learning tied to authentic, reality-based experiences in communities strengthened participants' commitment and involvement in their learning (Colby et al., 2007; Jacoby, 2009) and facilitated connecting theory to practice in their disciplines (Benner et al., 2010; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

At the start of the course, eight participants (57%) were disinterested in politics and political ideas and six (43%) had some prior interest in politics. All participants (100%) said their learning benefited from the authentic political and policy experiences in NURS 420. Two properties of Making it Real arose from their explanations as to how they learned from these: experiencing political processes for self and personalizing learning. Figure 4.2 conceptualizes the learning progression as participants had these authentic experiences and integrated what they saw, heard, and felt with class-based activities. The spiral represents participants' progression in the course with integration of

experiential learning events. On the right side of the figure are summary statements of impacts participants identified from these experiences.



**Figure 4.2 Visual of Integrative Learning Process of Making it Real**

Experiencing political processes for self and personalizing learning are described with illustrative data in the following section.

### Experiencing Political Processes for Self

Participants found experiencing political processes for themselves helped them reconnect with the world outside of nursing and put their learning into context of their nursing education and their personal ideas about political engagement.

#### Reconnecting with the World

Political education includes learning about valid news sources and becoming knowledgeable about news and current events (Colby et al., 2007; Jacoby, 2009). Discussing current events re-connected participants with the real world outside of nursing education. For Kelly, Casey, and Jesse, studying nursing was all-consuming, and the time-pressures of school resulted in reductions in former practices of listening to news and staying attuned to current events. Jesse said, “Quite honestly, prior to the 420 class, I was feeling like I was a little bit out of all the loops.” After taking the class, Kelly said, “I

thought it [the class] really just made me feel like I wasn't so out of touch with... current events, and it felt good to be like 'Yeah...I know what the issues are right now'."

Others, like Taylor and Sidney, did not routinely listen to news in the past due to feeling they just didn't understand it. For them, occasionally listening when they already felt they lacked knowledge exacerbated feeling out of touch. "I feel like when I don't know a lot about something, I'm not interested in it?" said Sidney. Her husband followed politics avidly, which also intimidated her. During the course, she felt her awareness of current events changed, "you do need to know...the history of...what's being talked about and what's all involved" and "I do feel we [her and her husband] can actually talk about things and I maybe have more of... an opinion than I would have before [laughs]." For her, connecting learning to current events in a bit-by-bit fashion in class made engaging in the larger world less daunting and more manageable.

Kelly also identified reading and discussion of current events as important activities that helped her learn. She said, "[G]oing through the process of... identifying... current issues that were related to nursing... and then eventually picking out our Advocacy [Paper] topic" helped build interest in current events and news while helping her find a topic that was personally interesting to her.

Taylor thought, "it's really good to pull in what's happening currently... with the reading, cause you read and you get the concept but then going online... and [seeing] what's going on right now is a good way to pull it all together." It took her learning from the realm of theory to reality, "you can actually see that it does relate to real world things, it's not just you reading in a book," she said.



Casey reported having gotten a news app on her phone during the semester as a way to keep up on news, “I..started feeling more compelled to be aware of issues where in the past, I wanted to but I haven’t taken the time.” Jan said, “since I’ve finished the course, I’m following a lot of the events going on both nationally and internationally...because it all shapes...the environment that I’m gonna be working in and the pay I’m getting.” She could see a connection between political actions and her own nursing career.

Through intentional and gradual immersion in current issues in weekly reading, homework, and discussion, participants were exposed to a variety of health and policy issues. They broadened their awareness of issues, learned where to find information about issues, and were re-connected with the larger world in which nursing exists.

#### Putting Learning into Context

When participants personally experienced policy meetings, attended the Statehouse, and experienced a mock committee process with a guest speaker, they began to see what was involved in policy processes and how citizens participated in decision making in these processes beyond the classroom and in communities. Having authentic political and policy experiences helped them put class reading and discussion into a real-life context.

Sidney was typical of political novices in the class who had never attended a public hearing. She talked about attending an education hearing about a controversial statewide plan to change K-12 education.

I’ve never really even seen something like that before...and I was kind of blown away... how many people were there and how much it really meant to so many

people...what it takes to even make a big change like that and...yeah, that *really* opened my eyes.

Her reaction to the experience at the hearing was typical of most participants who attended other hearings and meetings. Seeing people from their communities engaging in policy processes made them consider potential impacts of policy in their own lives, “I became interested and plus...I have two kids so I guess I didn’t realize how much of an impact that I could have... for [them],” said Sidney. She heard and saw the impacts of public policy decisions in people’s personal lives. Sidney reflected, “I probably would have thought there was not even anything I could do...before that, but to see...just common people there....getting their point across...it was impressive to me.” She thought about her past behavior of giving her opinion but “never realizing that you can actually do something about it or at least help.” Sidney added, “you know, change happens in numbers so... becoming more involved...and not just sitting back complaining.” After attending the public hearing, she gained insight into a potential way to influence change.

Attending meetings made reading and class discussion more genuine to participants. Terry had never attended any kind of policy meeting in her past. It brought to light health issues and topics that she did not realize were being discussed or decided in public arenas. She said, “I went to the...Medicaid budget hearings...and it was just surprising to me how passionate people are...and the time the committee took to hear people speak and take that into consideration...in forming the budget, so that was very new to me.” What was observed at meetings sometimes contradicted what participants previously understood about political involvement by citizens in the US. Chris who had

some political interest prior to class described her impressions of an education committee hearing at the legislature:

I was *dumbfounded*. I thought ‘Oh, you know...some people are going to be testifying’. *Line out the door...of people...*I thought that was so amazing...I guess it’s just because I’m not [very involved], but I just thought ‘oh, people are just really, apathetic about...government’ and no...they weren’t.

Jesse was a mature learner who had been involved in the past in political processes and in her community. She purposely attended legislative meetings at the Statehouse so she would have different experiences from those she had in her past. Jesse reflected, “it was interesting to be able to go [to the legislature] and actually watch nurses advocate for change...some being better prepared than others...I think that was *extremely* supportive to the curriculum...actually seeing it in action.” Her conscious selection of meetings relevant to her learning resulted in seeing nurses in action in a legislative policy setting, “...one of the nurses that stood up... to speak was just not well prepared at all, and I think honestly, that was very eye opening, like what to expect or anticipate.” She learned from the negative example about key course concepts—knowing one’s audience and preparing carefully for testifying.

For Robin and Kelly, the visit to the Statehouse was a highlight of the course. They described themselves as political novices who liked “hands on” activities. Robin said, “the one at the state Capitol was great...because I think it really kind of, in a brief way, [helped] our learning and made it relevant to us.” Kelly said, “it [Statehouse] had a big impact because I could see...[how it] related to...my career.”

Leslie described what she learned at the Statehouse from a mock committee process conducted by the political science student intern: “He was just thoroughly

informed about everything...every question that was thrown at him he totally just knew what was going on and it helped me to understand...different aspects of politics and how things work.” Casey found the intern clarified what she had seen when sitting in on a legislative committee meeting: “I found it helpful when [the intern] kind of walked through... how a bill becomes a law.” Hearing from and identifying with a fellow student from their university was intriguing and interesting. Perhaps for the first time for many, participants saw a young man from their peer group demonstrating interest and enthusiasm for political ideas and processes, something new to some in the class who believed that most people do not care and are not interested in politics.

Participants described attending policy meetings and going to the Statehouse as “enjoyable” (Pat), “fun” (Taylor), “cool” (Leslie) and found what they saw to be “impressive” (Jesse), and “amazing” (Chris). They had their “eyes opened” in these authentic experiences to the fact that many health topics were indeed being discussed in public forums. They began to see similarities in meeting processes. And they discovered avenues for participation in policy processes of which they were not previously aware. Casey summed up, “I could see what was happening, and coupled with actually experiencing it, kind of solidified it for me.” Attending the Statehouse field trip, hearing the intern, and attending policy meetings brought things together for her learning.

Experiencing political activities for themselves was important “in the moment” learning, which could not have been conveyed the same way from texts nor would participants have gained similar insights from reading. Another way participants made their learning more real to them was through personalizing learning, which is described next.

### Personalizing Learning

During interviews, participants identified their learning in NURS 420 was personal to them, which was surprising since many did not have a pre-existing interest in politics and/or policy making when they started the course. They were asked to explain what this meant and how this happened. During interviews, they spoke increasingly personally about policy experiences, using “I” statements and other emotive language. In addition, they used action language to explain activities they actually did or could see themselves doing in the future as a result of the course. Participants identified specifics about how their learning became more personally real to them, and Personalizing Learning emerged as a process involving connecting personally and professionally to political processes and finding a passion.

### Connecting Personally and Professionally

Being able to connect course ideas to oneself in both personal and professional ways was important in participants’ learning. Participants connected personally by considering their families, friends, and workplaces in relation to course ideas. They also connected their past, present, and/or future nursing selves to what they were learning.

Participants related instances of discovering how policy issues connected to their individual and/or families’ lives. Sidney realized the connection of a hotly debated education proposal to her children’s education. She said, “I definitely feel like I maybe need to get a little bit more involved...especially when it comes to...my kids and how much politics is involved in with what goes on with the schools.” Kelly said writing her Advocacy paper “kind of hit home, too...personally because...I have kids. Kind of hit me on two different fronts [as a mom and nurse].” The policy issue became more real “closer

to home” through the Advocacy paper writing assignment. Casey told how she found factual information about a news story for her mother as a result of learning about source use in class. She said, “my mom brought up something new that was just absolutely bogus that she heard on Fox news... it was about the FDA... whatever this claim was, they totally twisted it and...I gave her the website and I was ‘read about it here’, and so, I was really proud that I was able to do that.” For these three participants, connecting course ideas like policy making to their personal lives helped them envision seeing some potential for future personal and professional political engagement.

Chris talked with a friend about what she saw at the public hearings she attended. She mused, “Anyone could... try to get on the Legislature here... Maybe they need some different perspectives...it kinda made me start worrying in the back of my mind about maybe trying to pursue something like that someday.” She began to imagine future possibilities for herself as a state legislator.

Pat saw the passion and energy one of her peers had about a medical marijuana bill in the legislature. She said, “ [My friend] was really gung ho for that [medical marijuana issue] and I thought that was great... Sometimes, though, my perspective is completely different. I still have school and two kids...I don’t know how involved with it or how passionate I would get right now.” Life’s realities created definite time and priority issues for Pat who identified her family commitments as impacting her current ability to become politically involved, “But, I could see where I could get involved if I wanted to. Do you know what I mean?”

Through personal connections with friends and family and putting course ideas in context of things important to them, participants personalized their learning and made

policy more immediately relevant to their lives. Without this more personal, emotional connection, political processes and policymaking were something “out there,” disembodied from their lived realities.

Connecting Nursing Experiences to Course Ideas. Connecting learning to past, present, or future nursing experiences seemed important in helping participants identify more closely with course concepts. Leslie discussed the impact of Sullivan’s (2004) ideas about image, professionalism, and power on her own practices as a nursing assistant in a local hospital. “I remember reading about...how to present yourself in a professional manner.” She directly related text information to her attitudes, behaviors, and emotions about her job, “I know when I go to work and I’m put together, I’m in a better mood and feel a little more confident... and when I show up there all haggard and straggly, I’m just like, not really in it to win it.” Text ideas became more immediately relevant and personal when Leslie considered her present job practices and potential impacts on her future nursing career.

Other participants also drew on past work experiences to help them interpret and integrate new learning. Kim spoke about making changes in her workplace and said, “that’s what really struck me... ‘hey this could be me,’ and it made me realize that you don’t have to feel afraid or feel like you don’t have enough knowledge...you can [be involved].” As a political novice uninterested in political participation at the start of class, beginning to see herself as an agent in change processes was big. Jordan had a professional career in another discipline, which he left due to political workplace issues. He came to nursing purposely seeking a new, very different field from his previous one. He said:

And part of what this class did for me was to kind of mediate that [his past workplace experiences] for me a little bit, to kind of mellow it and say this is how humans get things done. And, politics is not necessarily a negative thing. It's a normal function of an organization.

Actively thinking about his past helped Jordan understand politics is everywhere, including workplaces. The class helped him navigate and participate in political processes to support his future goals in a new career.

Jesse recounted her past health care experience, "I've worked in the community... obviously not as a nurse but as a care provider, and I've always had a dedication to my patients." Telling stories of her past experiences was important for her learning by validating what she had done in the past, showing current accomplishments, and preparing her for a future vision of nursing. Jesse acknowledged her positive work and identified the new arena of policy work as something not part of her past practices or thinking. This was important for her in accepting and seeing how policy work might fit into her new vision of nursing.

Another component of personalizing learning for participants was finding a passion that could grab their personal and/or professional attention in the world of politics or policy. This is described next.

### Finding a Passion

Simply reading something in a book is not usually going to be what motivates a person to change a viewpoint or take an action, particularly when it comes to political ideas. Having or finding a personal passion is often needed to carry one into the arena. And being passionate about something implies thought, emotion, and often, action. Some participants had political passions prior to coming into the course and had them re-



charged or re-ignited as they progressed. Others had no interests in political things at the start but changed by course end.

Course activities and assignments aided some participants to connect personally with course ideas. One activity was a self-assessment called the Political Astuteness Inventory (PAI) (Clark, 1984), a tool adapted for use during the course. Participants took the inventory scoring their political knowledge and activities from 0 – 40 from unaware politically to politically astute. The following excerpts reflected common responses to the PAI. Taylor said, “I took that [the PAI] and it was like, ‘oh my gosh! I don’t know anything,’ so it’s kind of an eye opener.” Terry said, “I didn’t realize I was...not informed and not active...but I didn’t realize how bad off [laughing] I was...in that realm, so I think...that [the PAI] brought it to my attention.”

Pat said learning was more interesting when it was personal. She talked about Bb discussion groups as they came together on the DB to talk about weekly class topics: “who *doesn’t* [speaker emphasis] like to talk about themselves?” she said. She explained, “if it’s personal to you...then you have more of an interest and you open your mind more and then...you do learn.” Connecting personally not only heightened interest but aided Pat in becoming more open to ideas and topics under discussion.

Casey described understanding on a new, deeper level than in the past. She used the phrase, “taking the idea into my brain” and “learning clicking into place” to describe what having insights about professional nursing and politics felt like for her. Kim said, “Understanding about passing laws was an ‘aha’.” Both participants emotionally experienced insights, which translated some knowledge fact to more deeply felt

“knowing” in their core. For Casey, this connected her previous political interest with her new discipline.

The process of writing the Advocacy paper helped some participants connect more personally to policy advocacy. Lee said the Advocacy paper “stood out” for her: “I thought that was helpful because it [the paper] made it more real—like this is what you actually do... if you want to effect change in the future.” She listed ways the Advocacy paper made policy action more real to her. As she talked, her language changed from viewing the policy process as outside herself (use of “you”) to how she herself (use of “me” and “I”) would perform the process.

[I]t [the Advocacy paper] wasn’t just theory-based...like...*you can* effect change, *you can* get involved, it’s more like ‘well, this is *how you* get involved’; ‘this is *how you* effect change’ and like *me* going through the motions of who *I* would contact...how *my* information should be presented to that person, what they’re looking for, that’s what made it more real...more applicable to what *I* would be doing.

For her, writing the Advocacy paper made her authentically and practically consider what she would actually do to address this real policy issue as a nurse “Well, it helps me to apply what *I* would do in actual life”. She thought of herself as the nurse making her pitch to the policymaker in a genuine and personal way.

Kelly also had an “aha” moment as she realized the Advocacy paper was not “just a paper”: “[I]t became more than just an assignment, it became like, ‘yeah I really *care* about this,’” she said. Her paper was about a proposed tobacco tax and potential impact of deterring teens from smoking.

Leslie was a member and newly elected officer in the Student Nursing Association (SNA) just prior to taking NURS 420. She clearly had pre-course interests in

SNA, which motivated her to run for office, but the course and DB sharing helped crystallize her understanding of the benefits of professional associations. She recalled telling her DB group about her experiences; “I was kind of a little passionate about it at that time,” she said. “I just wanted people to know how cool it was and ...you really should get involved because it’s... so much fun...being a part of something.” For her, the combination of reading course materials, discussing online, attending association meetings, and experiencing official roles in the student association integrated cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning bringing her learning together in a powerful and personal way.

In summary, Making it Real was an important process in Engaging in Learning Together. All participants found experiential activities personally meaningful and relevant to making political processes part of their nursing repertoire. These experiences not only put theory about political processes into context, but they increased participants’ openness to political ideas and interest in learning and helped them to envision possible futures for themselves in political processes.

In Chapter Five, the processes of Learning Online Together and Learning Deeply are presented. Participants’ experiences of learning in their online discussions are shared in Learning Online Together. Insights about how they learned are described in Learning Deeply.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LEARNING ONLINE TOGETHER AND LEARNING DEEPLY

In this chapter, two processes of learning in Engaging in Learning Together are presented. Learning Online Together and Learning Deeply. Learning Online Together reflects the interactive learning process participants experienced in discussions in online discussion boards (DB). Learning Deeply emerged from participants' reflections about their thinking and learning in NURS 420 as they considered it in context with past learning experiences. Learning Online Together is discussed first in the following section.

### **Learning Online Together**

...you know, online discussion boards can sometimes be difficult...but I think our group did a really good job. It was one of the best groups I've worked with as far as the online discussion goes. (Terry)

Learning Online Together is the process of learning participants experienced in their learning groups on DBs in NURS 420. It describes participants' interactions with peers, the instructor, and others as they were actively involved in co-constructing meaning about nursing, politics, and policy. Research in online learning has identified the importance of establishing a feeling of community in learners (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Rovai et al., 2004). An environment of community for learning facilitated increased connection between students, commitment to learning, and engagement in online environments, particularly in those that are mostly text-based and asynchronous (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Rovai, 2007). All participants (100%) identified their

interactions with peers and the instructor on DBs as essential to making sense of political and policy concepts in relation to nursing.

Components of this process are committing as a team to learning, creating a learning climate, getting a system down, interacting with the instructor, and learning through peers' wisdom. In this section, these properties are detailed with illustrative participant data. The following figure is presented as a graphic organizer to identify the components of this complex learning process that emerged in this study.

<b>Learning Online Together</b>		
Committing as a Team to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting &amp; using norms</li> <li>• Experiencing collegiality</li> </ul> Creating a Learning Climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respecting one another</li> <li>• Buffering through DB</li> </ul>	Getting a System Down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding one's groove</li> <li>• Discovering &amp; managing challenges</li> <li>• Monitoring</li> </ul> Interacting with the Instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating supportive environment for learning</li> <li>• Being valued</li> <li>• Acknowledging faculty activities &amp; limits</li> </ul>	Learning through Peers' Wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing ideas together</li> <li>• Experiencing synergy</li> </ul>

**Figure 5.1 Learning Online Together Graphic Organizer**

### Committing as a Team to Learning

Committing collectively as a team to learning consisted of setting and using norms and experiencing collegiality. Requirements and guidelines for learning together in groups were built into course design and structure but how participants accepted and enacted these was up to them.

### Setting and Using Norms

Setting and using norms in online groups provided relevant, necessary structure for learning. Participants were not surprised to be asked to create norms during Week One as part of introductory activities in class. Taylor said, "when we first started the

group, we set up norms, ‘ok, have our posts done by this day’ and so on”; and Jesse concurred, “it was important to set up norms...they were good foundational norms and I think that everybody was very, very good about trying to abide by them.” Norms helped curb procrastination and defined expected postdates by members. They also contributed to members’ knowledge of expectations so they could make choices relative to their learning needs and schedules. Pat gave an example of how this worked for her “we all agreed on [norms], so if I was working on in the middle of the night...as long as everything was posted by the deadline, then we were able to read each other’s’ comments, and...comment back”.

Norms not only defined group behavior parameters but some participants expressed pride in group autonomy and self-management using norms. Robin described how her group used norms in an empowering way “...we worked on any issues that we had as a group because we never really, never wanted to go outside our group—we were a very understanding group.” Norms seemed to help participants not only take ownership and establish parameters of individual behavior, but collectively contributed to a group “esprit de corps” about expectations.

### Experiencing Collegiality

An unexpected finding about learning in DBs was that participants experienced collegiality and professionalism in their learning teams. Taking responsibility for team decisions and learning was one facet of experiencing collegiality. “[W]e had a very professional group that was very open-minded...it was a great group that wanted to learn, wanted to exceed,” said Jesse. Jordan said, “my little team happened to work really well together, had some motivated people.” Both felt individual members’ motivation and

acceptance of responsibility for learning contributed to establishing a collegial, professional environment in their groups.

Achieving a balance between competition and collaboration was a component of some groups' behaviors. Jordan said his team had helpful collaboration in most instances "Instead of being eight people competing with one another, it was eight people...as a team getting the assignments done...It was recognized this isn't a foot race you have to win." However, he experienced one instance when a group member crossed the line and turned collaboration into competition. The group member talked to him face-to-face to tell him he posted too much. He reported, "she was feeling like a competitive thing," and told him "'you're consuming too much time' and 'I don't feel like I can keep up with this'." He and the member conversed about posting and expectations, but he felt he was being told to conform, "everybody in this class is competitive...there's a little bit of pressure that way." Kelly, also, experienced an instance of competition versus collaboration when her DB group met face-to-face in live classes near the end of the semester to produce their electronic newsletter. She said, "I think it was that they just didn't really understand the spirit of the assignment... everyone's trying to jockey for position and...they kinda turned off their listening [laughs]." In both cases, participants experienced mostly positive teamwork overall with these specific instances of competition. Even so, these groups seemed to work problems through in a way that did not interfere with the overall success of the groups or satisfaction of members. And, participants' abilities to move through these issues, remain focused, and still feel satisfied with their groups' performance was further demonstration of positive conflict management within their groups.

Participants viewed themselves as teams with mutual goals of learning together. It was surprising to them that satisfying and valuable relationships could be built online together while learning in the course. Jesse reflected on a live class meeting near the end of the semester after spending ten weeks online with her group. Despite not remembering some group members' faces from the first week of class, she said, "...it was amazing because we almost built a relationship online...and it was kind of great fun, you know, when we got into our circles to work in a group face to face." Leslie expressed a similar sentiment about having learned to recognize group members' written personas, "And everyone just had their own, I don't know, their own voice, I guess... I could probably tell without seeing who it was who was writing."

#### Creating a Climate for Learning

Another dimension of Learning Online Together was creating a climate to learn. Creating a climate conducive to learning in DBs, which included respecting one another, being open and accepting of people and ideas, not experiencing putdowns, and buffering through DBs contributed to participants' positive learning.

#### Respecting One Another

Respecting one another as people with legitimate ideas and knowledge was important and fostered a positive climate for sharing. Lee spoke of her group, "We all had very different personalities but...that didn't create any problems...we kept a respectful tone and were able to mesh well with each other and ...take responsibilities and get it done." Elements of respecting one another were being open and accepting and not experiencing "put downs" of ideas or people.



Participants described having a climate in DB groups that was open and accepting of people and ideas. There was freedom to express thoughts and opinions honestly. Jan said her group was "...very open and welcoming and...you know, it felt safe...to talk and...I never worried that if I posted something that I would get belittled." It was expected that questions would be asked. Sidney said, "you could tell when someone really read your post when they ask a question 'well, have you thought about this?' ...when I was coming up with my paper topic...I think one of the gals asked me a question...I just thought that was pretty helpful." Participants could admit their lack of knowledge, explore differences, and share experiences, concerns, and fears.

Discussions were conducted in a way that provided consideration of each other's needs and yet challenged one another to learn. Kelly stated, "I thought it was a very supportive...and good group...and, you know, pretty high bar...which was a good thing." Casey gave this example, "there were some pretty controversial issues...there was something about nuclear energy and you could tell there was a lot of different viewpoints on it, but it was fine, we were all just contributing and learning from each other."

Not putting one another down was another behavior that contributed to the positive climate in DBs. Controversy was handled in ways participants regarded as positive. Lee said, "...everyone was *really* respectful...everyone was really...careful to not use...statements or anything that might be cutting towards another person." Not putting someone down meant not being rude, attacking, offensive, critical in a negative way, or judgmental of people or ideas. Taylor "never felt that anyone was attacking me or my ideas or putting them down." She explained her group's way of communicating: "I think our group was really good in that fact where we would say, 'you know, I see what you're

saying but you could look at it another way' and that's kind of how we would approach it." She reported hearing about "put downs" in other groups but it was not clear if this occurred in this class or in other classes during the semester. Participants were from all four DB learning groups and everyone repeatedly described their own group as being "accepting" and as a significant, helpful part of learning in NURS 420. The groups each created climates where participants felt good about sharing ideas with one another and could practice talking about controversial perspectives that are often part of political communication.

#### Buffering through DBs

Participants reported feeling a level of protection and security while participating in DBs for discussions. Buffering is defined as a protective, shielding effect created by learners and/or the environment, which exerts a positive effect on learning. Impacts of buffering included being able to take time to reflect, gather information, and/or present a knowledgeable assignment or response, and reading and presenting ideas without the emotions and visual responses usual in face-to-face encounters.

Participants felt talking about political ideas online helped them feel free to share ideas. Terry thought the DB helped "make people so they could say even more...it's because you're not having to deal with an immediate backlash or a rebuttal...to their opinion...it can kind of open it up a little bit." Jordan said, "I was able to... make my addition...and people can take it or leave it as they wish...I would have stated that [week two assignment] quite differently, in person...so yeah, it [DB] made a big difference."

Having time to read, reflect, think, and prepare assignments and responses to post in DBs was advantageous. Sidney said this was especially true for her due to the nature of course topics and feeling like such a novice in understanding political ideas:

I have to get all my thoughts together, and make sure I understand the question and stuff before I can...post a reply, and so, I thought that was beneficial because I could do it...on my own time and I'm not working on anything else, and I'd have time to...look into things that I didn't understand.

Leslie said, "I can formulate myself in words...better [in writing] than just right in front of you... you can kind of write it out however you want...It's more cheerful." She took comfort in writing her ideas down instead of saying them aloud in front of others. She felt more selective and accurate presenting her ideas and thought she wrote more than she would have said aloud if speaking with a group face-to-face in class. Sharing with others in class could be risky business and sharing political ideas may have been particularly so. Jordan felt vulnerable to possible censure from peers because he felt his views did not fit the norm for nursing students, particularly his views on nursing and politics. For him, the online environment gave him freedom to construct his message in a way that would be better received and understood by others in the group. Jordan said, "...[the DB] was really helpful...to have that extra layer of insulation rather than...if you're in a room full of people...well then, you have social pressures. All that stuff's a little bit further removed when you're doing it online." He felt less need to be politically correct in the DB and more able to be honest about his ideas and opinions.

Buffering through DBs added to a climate of increased security and confidence for participants who felt insecure for various reasons. Reasons included feeling like political novices, feeling different from other nursing students, and feeling like they

needed time for reflection and preparation. The DBs contributed to these participants' abilities to learn, contribute, and feel accepted for their views. They experienced more confidence and learning using written rather than spoken voice for this course.

### Getting a System Down

Another component of Learning Online Together was getting a system down. This component included finding one's groove, discovering, and managing challenges and a process of monitoring. Even if participants had taken online classes in the past, they had to get used to the requirements in NURS 420. Each week at the same time, a new topic was introduced, and groups asynchronously discussed the topic on DBs during the week. In addition, participants had to experiment within group norms as to what worked best for them for posting initial assignments and subsequent responses.

### Finding One's "Groove"

After a live class orientation for Week One, participants jumped right into online learning. They noted it took time to adjust to DB requirements and schedules: "...we got overzealous with the first week and over-posting like crazy, but I think once we kind of got the hang of it...I enjoyed it," said Kelly. Kim noted, "And once I got the hang of it [laughs] I was pretty good, but the first week was like 'whee, I forgot to [get] on and see the online responses' so it took just a bit to get the hang of it." Participants also found it took self-management to find a routine that worked for learning in the DBs. Taylor described her routine:

...we set up norms, 'ok, have our posts done by this day' and so on, but personally I just found it got easier to make my own due dates, like have my initial posts done early...I think getting that part done early really helped and then I had the

weekend to go back and just make comments on people's posts...so really, I had a pretty good system down and... so, once I got into that groove, I was good.

Lee had a similar system adding, "I tried to get it [initial assignment posting] done... right as the week was starting cause I knew if I waited, it would just be way too hard...to get it in." Most participants found ways to manage posting homework and reading and responding to messages within personal schedules so they felt in control of requirements.

### Discovering and Managing Challenges

Getting a System Down included discovering and managing challenges, particularly in DBs. Advice and tips for making a schedule, managing time in DBs, and managing Blackboard® (Bb) and technology were provided by the instructor in the course Bb site (Appendix C). Some participants, however, voiced challenges with DBs. Chris said:

I will freely admit that I did not read every post. I just got to a point where I just couldn't, you know? I would go through and read the headings or I'd see where you had responded to something and I'd pick that one to...read because of thinking maybe you'd had something to say about it.

Taylor reflected: "I remember being on vacation and...it's hard to remember to log in...and be by a computer....That was the only [time I]...kind of got frustrated... but I don't think there's really anything you can do about that." In Chris and Taylor's situations, personal choices, life events, and obligations played a role in challenges. The flexibility and convenience of online classes meant participants made choices to take vacations or took courses during significant life events like having surgery, pregnancy, or

vacation that might previously have meant not taking the class or altering personal choices. These choices then had their own consequences for participants to manage.

Robin identified challenges with the Bb platform and course design she worked around on her own: "...[T]hey just upgraded Bb and...for me, it seemed like there were so many tabs everywhere?...it took a while to realize the only [tabs] that I really needed to pay attention to [were] the Weekly Discussion and my Group one."

Some experiences of posting and timing mismatches in DBs were identified. Not getting responses to posts was noted by Taylor and Jan. For Taylor, it was "only one or two people would post, and then everybody else would... [be] procrastinators. I remember going back and looking to see if there were more posts and there weren't...that was the only thing that got sort of frustrating." Jan found "some of the members might only post 2 or 3 days a week... They may be done posting for the week when I post my question...So that kind of thing...is the area [where] I struggled." Keeping DB experiences fresh arose for Terry who felt her group sometimes got into a rut responding in similar ways to weekly discussions: "[S]ometimes you just feel like you're saying the same thing over and over...sometimes, I was kind of pulling stuff out of the air to make...the discussions go, but I think we did a pretty good job." With probing, Terry thought having more question prompts from the instructor would have helped the group explore alternative views and further develop discussions.

Finding Online Satisfying but Missing Live Connection. Interestingly, six participants (42.8%) said they wished they had taken the live class or missed having live interaction while simultaneously finding the blended online course to be satisfying and promoting their learning overall. This paradox was reflected in other studies of online

learning (Finegold & Cooke, 2006; Thiele, 2003). Jesse and Kim said they took the blended course because they lived far from campus (teacher notes, 4/11). Jesse suggested adding “live” guest speakers to talk about policy experiences: “I think there’s so much that can be shared in person that is...maybe even hard in print to be able to get across.” Kim thought it was hard to start writing her Advocacy Paper. She said, “I think if we would have been in class, it would have been a lot more clear...when you’re taking the online, you don’t have quite as clear an understanding as what people in class might have because they were more directly able to speak with [the instructor].” And Jan commented:

...because I was so novice and it could just be my learning style, I wish I would have taken the class in person? Just because—that instant feedback and maybe, if somebody didn’t answer the question exactly the way that I was looking for the answer, I could ask it again in a different way.

She had more than adequate posts and regular interaction with the instructor on her group’s DB, however, the interaction process with group members was not always satisfactory for getting her questions answered. Line by line coding of Jan’s transcript revealed the process she described to go something like this:

Having a question and posting it  
 Getting a response or a partial response  
 Having a follow up question  
 Not getting a complete answer  
 Waiting and not knowing if anyone would respond.

The asynchronous nature of the DB caused difficulties for her. Group members were not obligated to answer all questions by members. And if members did not necessarily need to log in any more in a given week due to having completed their requirements, a student

could be left with unanswered questions. Jan said, “it worked out OK” for her, particularly because of having questions answered by the instructor.

The contradiction of being satisfied with the blended course while still desiring or preferring live courses was largely explained by desires for spontaneous, real-time interaction with peers’, the instructor, or guests. Casey admitted she would have liked the live class to have interaction with the instructor for career mentoring: “[N]ot that you weren’t there...we did discuss my Advocacy Paper, but...it’s always important to have face time...in case I need a reference letter or something in the future? Actual knowing who I was kinda type of thing.” She felt knowing students was harder for faculty teaching online classes as well as feeling it was harder for students to find mentors.

Taylor had a different perspective saying, “I know that we had... just the same reading and assignments [as the live section]...but...we didn’t have you there...and so we didn’t have a professor, you know talking to us or teaching us concepts.” Her comments suggested she missed actually *seeing* faculty in the role of expert and information-giver but perhaps additionally, missed the *presence* and *energy* that real-time interaction with instructors can generate. In addition, the strong historical, sociocultural tradition of teachers being present in-person to teach may be operating here in that it is easier for students to see that teachers really are teaching in a live, real-time classroom. Students may not automatically associate the design of online course materials, written documents, and Bb DB interaction as “real teaching” because of the contrast with their “*grammar of schooling*” ingrained ideas about teaching (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 9).

For these participants, needs for convenience and flexibility overrode their need to take the live course section. The lack of ability to converse face-to-face with the



instructor and each other in real time influenced learning and meant they had to make adjustments to learn in this course. So how did they deal with this? Jesse and Jan contacted the instructor via email, phone, or in person (teacher course notes) to have questions addressed and receive guidance on weekly topics or Advocacy Papers. Kim and other participants regularly stopped by the instructor's office to chat about concerns and questions (teacher course notes). Overall, participants valued having flexibility, convenience, independence, and control over learning situations and were satisfied with blended class learning, even while wishing for elements of a live classroom experience. The more they took charge and managed their learning, the greater their ability to still have a satisfying learning experience.

### Monitoring

A final component of getting a system down was a process called monitoring. Analysis revealed that participants talked to one another about their learning in NURS 420. Some of this talk seemed to involve a sort of monitoring function. In their study of nursing students who took online courses, Sitzman and Leners (2006) identified "second fiddle worries" (p. 258) as a concern identified by participants. They expressed concern that they might not be as valued by the instructors as were students who took live classes. Monitoring is tentatively defined here as a form of student talk involving speculation or assessment about learning experiences for purposes of determining expectations or equity.

One form this took was speculation with one another about what was happening in the live class section of the course. Taylor said, "I just kind of wondered if in the live class there was more...lecturing...I guess I just wasn't sure." Sidney reported on what

others said, "...a few people had said...maybe, [live class] would have been better because you could ...be there for [instructor] input and discussion." Jesse said she talked with other students thinking, "maybe even in [live] class, you [the instructor] were able to share...some of your personal experiences...maybe even a little bit more than [in]...the online."

Participants also talked to each other about course texts with Leslie saying texts were "preferred by all"; Pat saying she'd "talked to friends"; and Sidney having "talked to others" about how they viewed the texts. In addition, they discussed the instructor's level of interaction on DBs and responsiveness using email (discussed later in Learning Online Together). Participants' statements clearly demonstrated they compared their course impressions and experiences with one another.

Another type of monitoring involved an incident when a DB group member felt overwhelmed with Jordan's frequent postings and wanted him to post less because she couldn't keep up with reading posts on the group's DB. Jordan's view of the incident was that the DB member turned posting into a competition rather than just doing her best (reported earlier in this chapter). Jordan said this "pressure" happened in other nursing classes, including ones not taught online. He described a clinical scenario early in the program when some confusing handouts were given to him and his peers in a lab class:

...I took it home and organized it, and typed it up and used it for the rest of the semester, so I was doing fine. And, they [the other students in the lab] were still all tangled up, because they didn't do that. I was literally told 'you're making me look bad'. And so, everybody passed; it was fine...But sure... just like any group, there's peer pressure and buy-in if somebody is getting a little out of line or something.

In this incident, monitoring may have played a sort of group regulatory function. A product of monitoring may be eliciting conformity within groups or socializing peers to promote or maintain activities within an accepted range of behavior.

It was not clear from interviews what purpose monitoring served for these participants and their learning in NURS 420. Comparison to the live class may have been necessary for participants unused to online learning to reassure them their learning would be just as valuable as it was for students in the live class. Monitoring may also have played a part in determining equity or fairness in the work demanded in the course. It may be that participants simply talked about experiences they had in common with friends who were in the other section of the class as they would talk about any course they were taking. The literature provided little guidance of this student activity. At any rate, some amount of monitoring was present and informed participants' learning in the course.

#### Interacting with Instructor

Another facet of Learning Online Together was interaction with myself as the instructor. When participants talked about what impacted their learning in NURS 420, they shared impressions about these interactions. Research on engaged learning has identified the importance of creating conditions for engaged learning as well as using teaching practices to facilitate engagement (Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Kuh, 2001, 2003; Schreiner, 2010a). During interviews participants were asked, "Interaction with other students and faculty was part of this course. Did this interaction affect your learning in any way? If so, how? If not, please explain further." Thematic results are shown in the table below.

**Table 5.1 Participant Perceptions of Instructor Interaction and Learning.**

	Participant Perceptions of Instructor Teaching Practices								
	Accessible	Prompt feedback	High expectations	Organized	Respectful; Genuine	Knowledgeable	Actively Engaged in teaching	Involved with DB	Positive behavioral traits
Lee		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sidney	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Kim					✓		✓	✓	✓
Robin	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Taylor			✓				✓	✓	✓
Jesse		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Casey	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Leslie					✓		✓	✓	✓
Pat	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Terry	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Kelly	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Jan	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Chris		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Jordan		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Themes of accessibility, prompt feedback, and others across the top of the table emerged from participants' statements during interviews. Positive behavioral traits included things like caring, being kind, interested, or motivating. Two areas showed participants' agreement at 100% for actively engaged in teaching and involved with DB. Close examination of these two categories revealed specific impacts on participants' learning in the DB environment, which clustered into three areas: creating a supportive environment for learning, valuing instructor connection, and acknowledging instructor limits. These are described further in the subsequent sections.

#### Creating a Supportive Environment for Learning

Participants felt their learning benefited by instructor participation in DBs. They knew I would be interacting and monitoring them online in DBs and felt this led to more

engagement on their parts. Specific instructor practices that strengthened participants' learning through discussions are described in the following table.

**Table 5.2 Instructor Practices which Strengthened Participants' DB Learning.**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Instructor Practices which Strengthened Participants' DB Learning</b>
Jordan	"take a different point of view... corrected someone or encouraged a bit more of an opinion from someone"
Casey	"[instructor] pointed out when we had to have sources" and "...engage in our conversations and kind of question us more about an issue, or pick [out] some key topics... I thought that was completely appropriate and...really effective"
Terry	"interacted with us well...were very calm... it helped us...further [our] discussions... [I] think it was an appropriate amount"
Jan	"give us a little bit of time for other members to answer [her questions] and then if they didn't... would come in with your answer"
Lee	"involved and knowledgeable"
Taylor	"you were really good about putting posts in there... I really liked that...[it] spark[ed] some interest and further debate."

Participants easily identified a variety of specific instructional actions that positively affected their DB learning.

#### Valuing and being valued on the DB

Schreiner identified the types of practices identified in the previous section as benefiting students' cognitive learning engagement (2010b, 2010c). Her research also identified a psychological, emotional component to engaged learning, which served to help students commit to learning not only with the mind but with the spirit. Participants had affective, evaluative responses to instructor interaction. They felt their work was being thoughtfully read and I valued them by investing time to help them learn. Words like "actually" and "really" used by participants during interviews emphasized something being especially important to them. Chris thought I "...found a way to pretty much

respond... not just with a canned response but like you'd **actually really** read what we said and were interested." Sidney echoed, "it felt like you were **actually** paying attention to us, and **really** reading." My interest translated into motivation to do good work themselves as learners. "[I]t was just so exciting, it was like an extra reward almost," said Casey: "... 'she thinks I was interesting'."

Instructor interaction on the DB seemed to go a long way to mitigating the sometimes impersonalized and disconnected learning in online environments which several participants felt in other online classes they had taken. "I think for online classes like th[is] a facilitator that's completely...engaged is imperative...if we were just out there on our own doing it, I just don't think any of us would have gotten very much out of it," said Chris. The fact that some participants were surprised by the amount of my interaction in DBs based on their past online course experiences spoke to the variation they had previously experienced in how online courses were taught as well as their intent.

#### Acknowledging Instructor Activities and Limits

Another dimension of interacting with the instructor was acknowledging my activities and limits. This reflected participants' genuine empathy and concern about me as a "real" person who shared a learning relationship with them. Some participants were cognizant of the amount of time and work it took for me to engage in the course. They identified keeping up with the DB and having limited time as areas they thought might be challenging. Kelly, Casey, and Taylor knew their own time commitments in DBs and realized there was significant time involved for me as well. "I could imagine how time consuming that would be....to be monitoring [groups] all the time," said Kelly. Because they were adults with multiple life commitments, they had awareness and sensitivity to

the instructor having a family and being in school, too. Jesse said, “I was amazed at how much interaction [there was] with our group knowing... you have the live classes and other classes that are in the public health semester...there’s probably even much more outside of that.” Jordan said, “I don’t know how you could keep up with that, being only one person and all of those posts.” Participants’ recognition of me at a human, personal level conveyed a sense of solidarity and spirit of being “in this together” as we co-created understanding together through the unfolding of the course. *They* felt valued by me and in turn, they reciprocated with deeper understanding of me as a person and recognition of my engagement in their learning.

Overall, participants identified the authentic presence and interaction practices of the instructor conveyed an impression that they, their ideas, and learning were interesting, valuable, and worthwhile. Instructor presence and engagement also contributed to greater recognition and understanding of faculty efforts on behalf of their learning.

#### Learning through Peers’ Wisdom

The last major dimension of Learning Online Together is learning from peers’ wisdom. Learning from peers’ wisdom on DBs was a major way in which participants derived meaning and made sense of course ideas and concepts. Much research on cooperative and collaborative learning supports enhanced understanding, satisfaction, and engagement through discussion with peers and instructors (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Rovai, 2007; Smith et al., 2005). Participants discussed ideas together, which led to improving understanding, increasing interest in course topics, seeing others’ perspectives, and experiencing synergy on the DB. All participants (100%) expounded in detail about what they learned from each other and how this impacted their learning. What emerged in

analyzing this was “a process within a process.” In other words, discussing ideas together on DBs involved its own cyclical and synergetic process within Learning Online Together, a discussion process that led to learning through peers’ wisdom.

### Discussing Ideas Together

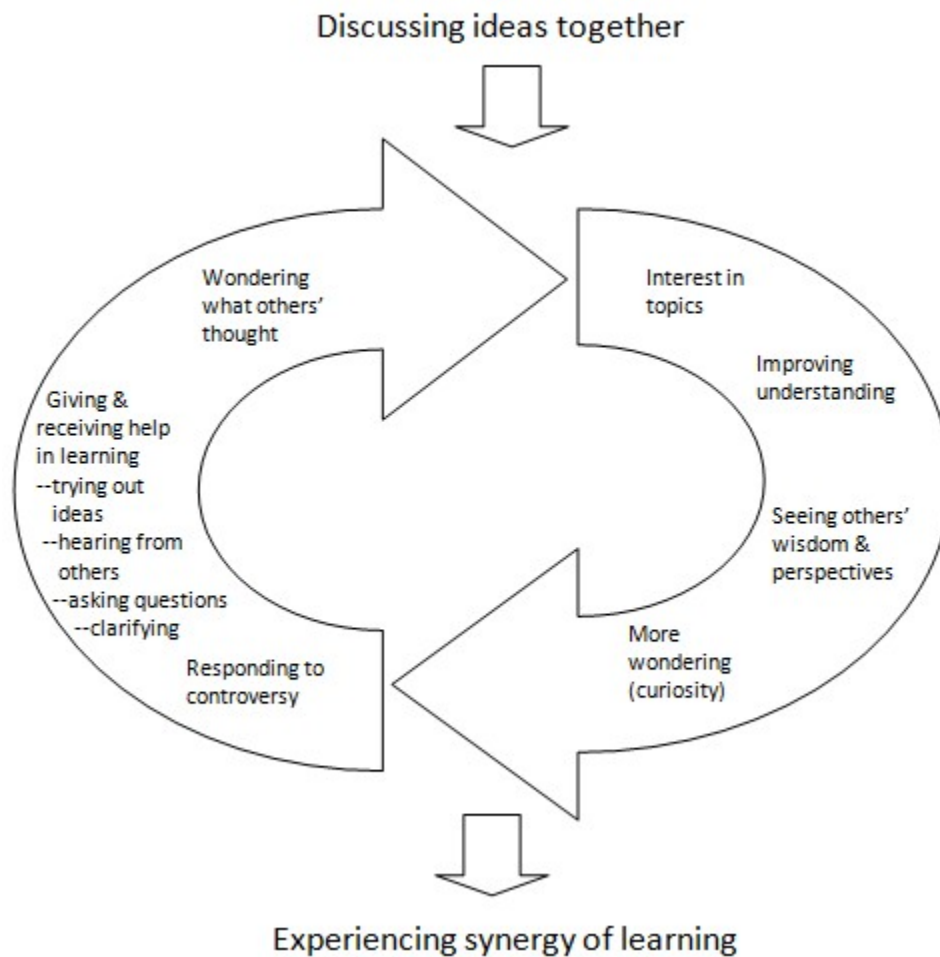
Jan felt discussion on the DB was one of the most important influences on her learning political ideas in the class:

[B]ecause my knowledge was so...small in that area [politics], I needed to go back to the basics... I could say ‘Ok now, wait a second, let’s go back...’ and ‘what is...?’ I would have really struggled [without DB] so I think the discussion is *definitely* a key for me. (Jan)

Jesse said, “...what you can learn...in the collaboration was amazing, because everybody had so much to bring, so many experiences.” Jan’s and Jesse’s comments represented those expressed by the other participants about learning through discussion on the DB.

Discussing ideas together was a generative process that—involved giving and receiving help in learning course concepts. By giving and receiving help to one another which included trying out their ideas, hearing from others, asking questions, and clarifying—participants learned about political ideas and nursing. Responding to controversial ideas and wondering what others thought each week led to improved understanding, interest in political ideas and topics, and generated further curiosity about others’ perspectives. Figure 5.2 shows this process.





**Figure 5.2 Schematic of Discussing Ideas Together on DB**

The reinforcing, generative process inherent in discussing ideas together on DBs is represented in the figure. A positive, synergistic learning effect occurred when participants' engaged in the interactive processes on the circular arrows leading to learning more than they expected and reinforcing practices of engaging in learning together. Each of the components in this cycle is shown in the following sections with illustrative quotes from participants.

Giving and Receiving Help in Learning. A spirit of camaraderie was present in participants' comments as to how and why the DB helped their learning. Both giving and receiving help in learning was woven throughout their responses. Lee said, "...posting an

answer in the discussion board and having someone respond to you, I actually like having their response there...where I can...really see what they're saying and think about it...and...have a good thought-out response to it." Kelly added, "[E]verybody built on what other people said." The DB provided a means for participants to try out their newly forming political ideas with one another in a safe environment.

Hearing from others gave participants a sense of the diverse opinions and ideas about politics and nursing. Kim said, "it really gave me a broad view of how everybody looks at politics"; and, Taylor stated, "you also got insight as to how others were thinking about it [politics]." This appreciation of diversity was seen as positive in moving discussions along and developing ideas. Casey spoke with a peer from her DB outside of class saying that person told her "'you're my lightning rod' ... we helped each other a lot [with ideas]."

Asking questions on DBs was also viewed positively. Questioning each other for learning weekly class topics as well as completing major course assignments was valued: "...we were also able to ask questions...and get answers from...our peers" (Taylor).

Questioning also helped participants like Jan to clarify understanding of political ideas:

...[I]f there was some concept that I was struggling with that maybe wasn't the [homework] question but I just felt you know, like I just needed more clarification on a certain concept, I would often just throw that out there to the group, you know ' what does this mean? I'm struggling with this' and they would respond back.

Questioning helped her move her initial tries at making sense into the "more heads are better" safe environment for questioning in her group. Having the freedom to both give

and receive questions on homework and related topics contributed to participants feeling their learning was progressing on DBs.

Wondering What Others' Thought. Casey recognized she had not heard some peers “open their mouths” in previous classes. She was excited to hear from these students and know them and their ideas better. She identified wondering what others in her group thought as something that compelled her to return again and again to the DB: “[T]here w[ere] definite times when I was like ‘I can’t wait to see what they say’ or I was kind of proud of my response...and ‘I wonder what somebody else is going to think about this or about that,’” she said. Others also wanted to return to DBs—Kelly wanted to see “...if they had responded to what I had to say and that was kind of fun, made you want to come back.” Leslie said, “It’s like checking your Facebook or something [laughs]. You like, go in and check the Bb posts and see who responded to yours... you’re interested to hear what people say.”

Responding to Controversy. Discussion boards provided a venue for learning how to talk about controversial topics and differences of opinion about political ideas. Taylor said, the DB “...was kind of a good way to just learn how to work in a group and put down feedback like in a positive way and...work together.” Lee said, “I would put in caveats of ‘I don’t mean this to be disrespectful’...like I’m either playing devils’ advocate or I just have an opposing view, or something like that” to handle hot topics in discussion. Pat thought, “...our interests were all so different...and very interesting, and I think they all acted very professionally,” referring to how her group members handled differences of opinion in discussions. Jordan wished he had had more honest feedback and responses from his group on some controversial topics. He felt most nursing students

had been acculturated to a similar, passive communication style for dealing with controversy: "...they don't [speak up] because their culture says 'don't'." He preferred more direct communication: "...my culture that I came from would say it, and I'd think nothing of it, make correction, and then move on."

Improving Understanding. Group discussions facilitated improved understanding through shared experiences and struggles in a safe environment. Jan shared:

[I]t was nice for me to hear others who were having some of the same struggles I was having as they were trying to learn about this whole process...it was good to hear those that had more experience, that could really, kind of, take my knowledge... a step farther, so *I really* liked the discussions.

Her anxiety about being in strange territory in learning about political ideas and nursing was decreased by seeing others were unsure as well. Kim gained confidence to try out ideas with her DB group in this shared environment: "[I]t helped me to understand and feel more at ease about things because other classmates felt the same way," and contributed to her confidence. This security was expressed by participants in all four learning groups. Chris said, "it was nice for me to hear that there are other people...that did have those same views as me." Jesse described, "[we] had concerns...as new nurses...we are afraid that we're gonna mess up...we were able to discuss our insecurities as well as really bring our experiences and our concerns and views to the table and really have those appreciated."

For Robin, discussions with group members extended her learning beyond initial understanding of course readings. She said:

...every week it seemed like I would take something out from our conversations and interactions together, and it would build...I may not have understood it in the

readings or understood it in your discussion [faculty essay], but hearing it from a third opinion, it really kinda grounded itself for me.

Participants felt sharing this way improved their understanding of political course ideas and the application to nursing. Lee said, “I would...see how other people were experiencing things and thinking about things as well...that was really helpful and made it more like...a live class that you’re attending with...other people.” Specific ways DBs helped them to learn included providing support through knowing they were not alone in feeling like political novices (Kim), using resources provided by group members (Sidney), and expanding learning from their initial posts (Robin).

Through DB groups, participants gained new understanding of their own and each others’ multiple commitments. Lee shared her challenges: “it was just kind of...hard with the demands of all the other class work and course work that I had for this semester...and having two young kids and that sort of thing.” Jordan expressed his awareness of differences in his life as a “single” and others in his group: “...there’s people working a job, taking care of kids, there’s a husband...all that stuff, and I couldn’t manage that. I don’t know what that’s like.” Leslie felt, “we were...understanding of everybody--kids getting sick, or they were sick, or something happened.” Shared understandings deepened awareness of their own needs and challenges as well as finding experiences in common with others in their groups.

Increasing Interest. Participants noted DBs increased their interest in course topics and ideas. Leslie commented the most meaningful activities for her came from the diversity of perspectives and activities: “...go in and check the Bb posts...you’re interested to hear what people say... we had some pretty stimulating people... it gave me

more interest in wanting to know more about nursing politics.” Robin described how ideas grew on the DB as students expressed themselves; “I would always bounce the questions off of other students inside our discussion board...and then [the instructor would] type in and then sometimes we’d bounce new ideas off of each other...it was very eye opening,” and contributed to her interest to return again and again to clarify further and gain new insights. Participants experienced improved understanding and increased interest both as an outcome of posting on the DBs and as incentive or reinforcement to contribute more confidently in future posts and homework.

Seeing Others’ Perspectives. Participants (100%) found sharing learning together on DBs helped them see others’ wisdom and perspectives about course ideas and topics. This went beyond simply posting homework questions and a course obligation to post replies to one another. Casey shared, “learning from my classmates, we all came from such different backgrounds and things. Some of them...had a lot of wisdom about a lot of different issues.” Taylor reflected, “...so, it wasn’t just your thoughts on the reading assignment or what you had found but you also got insight as to how others were thinking about it...we were also able to ask questions...and get answers from, you know, our peers.” Pat’s view was similar: “we were able to read each others’ comments, and...then comment back...that was interesting. You learn quite a bit from your other class members.” Jesse summed up:

I thought our group was just really very amazing and how we were able to fill in gaps and pieces and really able to talk about so many different issues... but you know, to carry on those conversations and have different people share different experiences and knowledge, was pretty important.....it’s such an asset to have so many different views and visions that are all directed toward the benefit of...you being the most professional group.

Could shared learning such as that described by these participants be the beginning of realizing the wisdom that is held collectively in nursing? Learning to depend on one's colleagues for ideas, collaboration, and to expand one's thinking is important as a student but may, more importantly, lay the foundation for deeper, collegial relationships in future nursing practice.

### Experiencing Synergy on the DB

Discussing ideas together in this cyclical process seemed to result in participants' experiencing some degree of synergy on their DBs. Casey's description of the "snowball effect" in her group's discussions encompassed other participants' descriptions about the additive, compelling nature of DBs on their learning in the course. This synergy was present not only in Casey's group but in the other three groups. While the degree of synergy may not have been identical in each of the other groups, elements of this "snowball effect" process appeared in all participant transcripts.

When asked to describe her learning and the tone of discussions in the DB, Casey described it this way:

...I just keep saying 'engaged' but it would be like someone would write an idea, and then, it was kind of like a snowball effect...Cause one person would have their idea and then... you could tell when someone...was passionate to respond about the same idea so they write back, you can tell when they're excited about it, too, and so, overall for snowball effect they're like--this person's learning and at the same time, I'm learning from them but I'm also helping them learn by putting my ideas about it. And of course [the] ideas kind of converge and [laughs] become this giant snowball? I don't know how to explain it [still laughing].

Appendix H illustrates this synergistic snowball effect showing the line by line codes from participants' transcripts, which then clustered into thematic codes within the focused code of experiencing synergy on the DB. Thematic codes—viewing others'

learning, discussing as compelling, sparking each other's learning, growing ideas, furthering thinking, having fun, and deepening learning—name processes characterizing DB synergy, which emerged through participant interviews.

In summary, Learning Online Together is a complex, generative, interactional communication process existing within the overall theory of Engaging in Learning Together. Discussion boards were successful vehicles for bringing participants together to learn political ideas and course concepts. Being able to read and think about political ideas with peers and the instructor generated interest, broadened perspectives, and provided participants with new information about nursing and political processes. Positive contributions, commitment, and interaction on the part of participants, their peers, and the instructor led to synergistic, meaningful learning experiences.

In the next section of this chapter, the process of Learning Deeply is described and illustrated. Participants' statements revealed some insights they gained about the character and quality of their learning through Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, Making it Real, and Learning Online Together.

### **Learning Deeply**

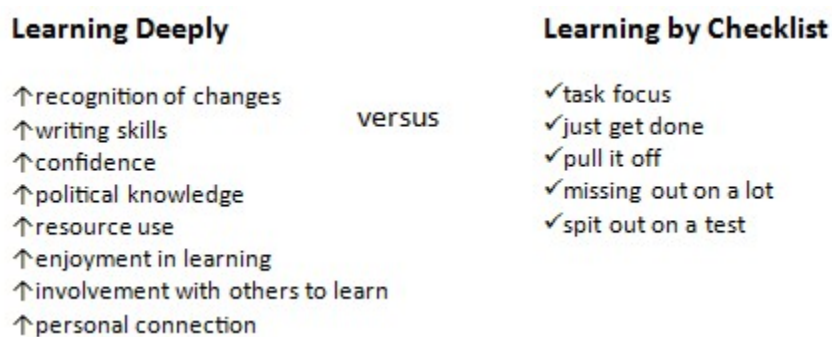
'OK... this is not *just* something I have to do to get checked off my list...this makes sense, it's important and is not just busy work. (Kelly)

Participants felt their learning in NURS 420 was deep and meaningful.

Characteristics of deep learning include ownership of learning, conceptual understanding, integration of new ideas with previous ones, and learning with peers and instructors (Millis, 2010). Atherton (2011) added real world application of ideas and seeing learning as “exciting and a gratifying challenge” (para. 7) to characteristics. When describing how



and what they learned, participants spoke of gaining specific skills as well as expressing affectively what they valued about their learning. As participants talked about their learning in interviews, they contrasted what they experienced in NURS 420 with previous learning experiences in nursing courses and the university. Properties of Learning Deeply included recognizing learning achievements, seeing areas for growth, finding enjoyment in learning activities, and contrasting with learning by checklist. The figure below illustrates qualities of Learning Deeply and illustrates the contrast of learning by checklist described by participants.



**Figure 5.3 Learning Deeply versus Learning by Checklist**

Phrases under Learning Deeply summarize participants' remarks, and phrases in learning by checklist are from their statements during interviews. Both are illustrated in the section that follows. Recognizing achievements is discussed first.

### Recognizing Achievements

Some participants recognized achievements they gained through their time in the course. They realized they changed perceptions and broadened their horizons as well as saw and felt specific gains in certain areas of learning. The figure below identifies participants' recognition of their achievements.

	Sidney	Kim	Robin	Taylor	Casey	Leslie	Pat	Kelly	Jan	Jordan
Recognizing broader outlook in views	*	*		*						
Seeing learning gains	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*

**Figure 5.4 Participant Recognition of Learning Achievements**

Taylor recognized her new political insights “throughout the course I can definitely see how we’re [nurses] in a really good position to do some really good things and advocate to be...part of the whole political scheme. Yeah, it’s definitely broadened my horizons.” Sidney kept returning to her experience of attending a public hearing as something pivotal in making her aware that others cared about issues like education and health: “I was kind of blown away.” Prior to that, she had absolutely no interest in political things. For both her and Taylor, their new perceptions were in such contrast to what they thought prior to the course, the changed perception was a significant gain in learning to them.

Specific learning gains noted by participants were varied. Casey talked about the experience of writing the Advocacy Paper: “I was so proud of that paper. It’s one of the achievements of...my education... I’ve written several papers but there’s only a couple that I’m like ‘oh my, I really put all my effort into that’.” Jordan saw growth in using literature to support written ideas, writing for different audiences, and using a writing format. Leslie recognized her personal growth during the semester: “This semester my

confidence has grown more than it ever has, and that feels really good,” noting gains in the areas of speaking and writing.

Robin reflected, “I didn’t really understand that I’d gain that much understanding and knowledge [about politics] from the class, but I did.” Other learning achievements participants identified included gaining knowledge about political involvement (Pat), learning about legislative and issue websites (Leslie), seeing how media presents issues, and using internet resources (Casey).

Participants’ interview participation afforded them time and space necessary to fully reflect on course learning, which they may not have otherwise done without being part of this study. Recognizing and recounting what they learned and valuing their learning insights contributed to participants’ overall satisfaction with their learning experience.

#### Seeing Areas for Growth or Action

Part of reflecting on learning achievements included also seeing areas for continued self-growth or action. While Leslie recognized her growth in confidence, she also felt the need for more knowledge on issues: “I guess I still don’t know, exactly where I stand on everything...I mean, I know a little more, but that doesn’t mean I know enough to be like a hundred per cent positive about this is where I stand on every issue.”

Some participants recognized they needed to practice participating in some kind of political process. They could envision themselves participating in political processes in the future. Kelly said, “I’m going to join either the Idaho Nurses Association or the American Rehab Nurses Association depending on if I stay...where I’m at or not. Join at

least one organization.” Chris worked at a local medical center as a nursing assistant and had already spoken to her boss about her future involvement in committees in her workplace. She knew her future work happiness depended on being a participant in making change happen: “I’m gonna have to take a step up at some point and really try and make some changes in our system if I’m gonna be happy working in it.”

### Finding Personal Enjoyment in Learning

Participants’ affective statements about their learning in NURS 420 reflected enjoyment in learning. Atherton (2011) and Schreiner (2010a,2010b) identified that connecting emotionally to learning results when learning engagement is high, and that emotions like satisfaction and enjoyment are related to learners’ motivation, investment and/or commitment to learning processes. Participants evaluated their learning positively. Terry said, “at first I was like, ‘oh my gosh, I, this is going to be a really boring class’, but ....it turned out to be one of the most interesting classes I’ve taken....so I thoroughly enjoyed it.” Jordan said, “It [the class] was something I looked forward each week. Of all the stuff I had to do each week, I thought ‘OK, this’ll be fun’.” Kelly said, “when I saw the title of the course I went, ‘ugh....’ [laughs]...Greeeaaat! [still laughing] ‘This is going to be the semester from hell’ and it was like, my favorite class!”

Participants identified enjoying writing and specific political activities, learning in groups, and finding personal enjoyment generally in the class. Examples of each are listed in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3 Examples of Participants' Satisfying Learning Activities**

Satisfying activities	Participant examples of specific satisfying learning activities
Enjoying writing	<p>I guess the group work, the brochure [policy newsletter], that worked really well...and it was cool to see all of our articles (Leslie).</p> <p>I really enjoyed that project [Advocacy Paper]...the research that I did was very fun. I learned a lot of different ways to find information and definitely feel I solidified that APA (Jan).</p>
Enjoying specific political activities	<p>I thought that was interesting, just being able to figure out...what district we're in and who would be our representatives...cause that's something that maybe most people know, but I didn't (Sidney).</p> <p>I actually really enjoyed attending the...meeting I went to...I think I went to two City Council meetings. It was interesting to see the whole process, and...I had never sat in on a meeting before (Taylor).</p>
Enjoying learning in groups	<p>Yeah, because I was actually doing a little teaching, kind of a little enlightening... So, I was being a little bit of a political activist, sometimes, too, and that was kind of fun (Jordan).</p> <p>...and it was kind of great fun, you know, when we got into our circles to work in a group face to face (Jesse).</p>
Finding personal enjoyment	<p>...but it was just so nice that it was the fact that you were responsible for your own learning—you had to be engaged (Casey).</p>

Finding enjoyment and satisfaction in learning contributed to engagement for participants.

#### Contrasting to Learning by Checklist

While explaining why they thought their learning was deep and meaningful, participants contrasted their experience in NURS 420 with other experiences in the nursing program or the university. Learning by “checklist” was learning that emphasized marking items off their list, doing work just to get it done, and/or pulling it off but missing out on learning. Casey described checklist learning: “So, you know we can read textbooks all day and not get anything from them...but it's like, on your checklist and you just check it off.” She went on to contrast what happened in NURS 420: “...but when you actually have to do the readings and it's tied in with your assignment which gets

discussed or posted online...it's like a continuation of the learning." She felt checklist learning focused more on task accomplishment, in this case, required reading.

Casey went on to describe how she first regarded the Statehouse field trip as a class requirement: "...at first I thought 'oh you know...field trip, we're going to the Capitol', all right whatever...I thought first of all that...it sounds silly." Experiencing the field trip and deeper thinking on her part changed her focus: "but...just being in that atmosphere where you are a professional... it kind of puts in my head 'OK as nurses, we are professionals and we should present ourselves as such and take pride in that'." She moved from checklist, task-focused learning to something more deeply personal and relevant.

Kim's statements about her experience in past online classes were consistent with the idea of checklist learning: "a lot of times in online classes, just being honest, a lot of people just do the work to get it done, and... that means just skipping over things and doing what you need to do." Jordan also contrasted some previous learning experiences when he focused on just getting through the experience saying, "even if it's not interesting to me, it's what I have to do to get to the end result." He thought those experiences were different than in this course where his interest in topics was high.

Jan thought students' own motivation to learn in NURS 420 played a part in whether they truly engaged to learn or "pulled it off" but missed out on real learning opportunities. She contrasted her personal drive to learn in the course with others who got required work done but did not go beyond to use the additional links provided in the course: "I guess if a person wasn't as motivated to learn, maybe they wouldn't take the time to go to those links and that would just be...a missing link for them in their

education.” Jan talked about students who procrastinated in writing the Advocacy paper: “...if you do that [write Advocacy paper at the last minute]...all you’re doing is getting the paper done, you’re not experiencing the whole process.” She drew a distinction between fully experiencing writing processes as she had done and completing work at the last minute to meet the requirement: “they’re only shooting themselves in the foot by doing that...in the end, I think they pulled it off, but...they missed out on a lot.”

Participants’ familiarity with both deep and checklist learning suggests all have used both at some time or another in their education. Participants’ statements about their learning in NURS 420 are overall more aligned with Learning Deeply than with learning by checklist. Their statements in the four processes previously described, Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, Learning OL Together, and Making it Real, also lend support to the statements in this section. Participants’ learning appeared to go beyond learning simply to get done but instead was consistent with active engagement with course ideas, each other, and the instructor, resulting in learning that was more deeply meaningful to them. Chapter Six, *Becoming Political*, describes the consequences of participants’ learning in NURS 420. It describes what changed as a consequence of their learning in the course of their journey to becoming more political.

## CHAPTER SIX: BECOMING POLITICAL

Chapters Four and Five presented findings from the processes of Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, Making it Real, Learning Online Together, and Learning Deeply, which depicted how and why participants learned in NURS 420. This chapter provides descriptions of findings from the final process, Becoming Political, which illustrates what changed in participants' perceptions about political ideas, policy making, and nursing from course beginning to course end.

### **Becoming Political**

I didn't really understand just how wide-reaching nursing could be. I think I knew it in a, kind of a vague sense but I just didn't really realize 'Yeah, OK!'. We can effect...so much, you know, in a wider, bigger picture kind of thing. (Kelly)

During interviews, participants were asked, "what, if anything, in their way of viewing nursing and political processes changed?" as they took the course. As participants reflected on how they learned, they contrasted what they felt or knew at course beginning with what was different in their learning at course end. A process of Becoming Political emerged. This process is reflected on the right side of Figure 4.1 (Chapter 4).

One's life experiences, knowledge, and beliefs impacts how new ideas are integrated with old. Previous political knowledge and/or practices or lack of the same filters how one learns new information (Jacoby, 2009; Lopez & Kiesa, 2009). The



journey to learn new disciplinary thinking and practice is affected by how one perceives the discipline (Benner et al., 2010; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). These ideas were reflected in what participants had to say about what had changed in their perceptions since taking the course.

In this chapter, participants' pre- and post-course views of 1) political processes, 2) nursing, and 3) connections between nursing and politics are reported. Becoming Political included recognizing preconceptions about politics and nursing, perceiving political processes differently, expanding notions of nursing, and recognizing politics as part of nursing. The first section elaborates on participants' preconceptions about politics and nursing.

### Recognizing Preconceptions about Politics and Nursing

As participants reflected on changes in their learning from course beginning to end, their responses revealed preconceptions in three areas: politics, nursing, and whether nursing and politics were connected in any way.

#### Preconceptions about Politics

Participants had preconceived ideas about politics and policy processes at the start of NURS 420. Preconceptions about politics and policymaking included: 1) having pre-existing interests in political processes; 2) having little time for political things; 3) not seeing some things as political; and 4) avoiding politics and political things.

Having Pre-existing Interests in Political Processes. Six participants (43%) had some level of pre-existing interest or involvement in politics and/or policymaking. Jordan said, "the class was not at all outside my comfort zone; I think for some people it

probably was.” Casey also said, “I’ve always been interested in it, so...I was kind of already starting with, ‘this isn’t one of those dry old courses to me’.” Chris described herself, “when I was younger I was much more active in college...in student council, and things like that, but...I’ve just kind of fallen off the radar; I’m kind of disillusioned... I’m very angry but...not very active.” Pre-course interest and/or involvement took the forms of watching news (Casey), learning about issues (Jordan), participating in a group or association as a member or officer (Jan), doing community work (Jesse), and/or voting (Chris).

Having Little Time for Political Things. Two participants who also had pre-existing political interests and/or activity described having less involvement in political activities in which they had participated in the past while in nursing school. Jesse came from a small town family with a tradition of community involvement and political activity: “I was raised to be active [politically], to have views and to ask questions and research, but...as my education has progressed, I’ve been a little bit less active.” Pat said, “I voted in the past, but...[pause] sometimes you...get busy in your life and school and kids are sort of more of a focus, than say, politics are.”

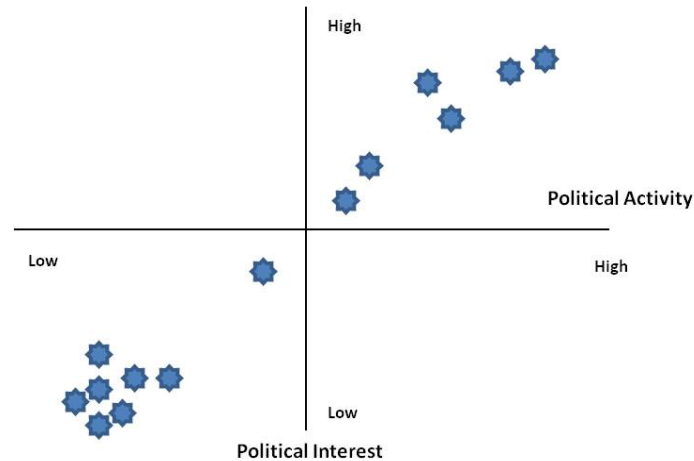
Not Seeing some Things as Political. Two participants did not view some things, like health care, as political prior to the course. Pat saw health care workplaces as political but did not connect health issues reported in the news as being influenced by politics or policy: “I mean, you hear some stuff in the news every once in a while...about the surgeon general or the recommendations...to not smoke and to eat a healthy diet...but I guess that’s not really politics.” Taylor had no pre-existing interest in politics and did not view health care as political. She said, “I thought politics was just kind of

synonymous with special interests and... a dirty word...I've never been that involved in political discussions and so...yeah, I had a pretty narrow view of politics. I just didn't really know much about it."

Avoiding Politics and Political Things. In contrast to participants who had some level of political interest, eight participants had little to no interest or involvement in political processes. Reasons for avoidance ranged from lack of knowledge, boredom, and disillusionment to finding politics downright "scary" (Kelly), unethical, and "dirty" (Taylor). Participants also felt their opinions or actions would not matter or that "other people will deal with it...not me" (Lee).

While participants listed a variety of reasons that impacted their pre-course perceptions of political processes, they admitted lacking fundamental knowledge and understanding of political processes. Kelly stated, "I didn't really understand a lot of the political processes... I didn't want to be involved...it was scary." In addition to lacking political understanding, some participants thought it would be wasted effort to be involved in political processes like voting. Robin conveyed this idea also felt by others: "I'm just one person in over a million people that vote, so honestly I never voted... I really never took part in any of that."

A scatterplot visually represents participants' positions along lines of political interest and activity. Each participant was rated as high, medium, or low on interest and activity based on their qualitative statements of political interest and prior or current activity and reports of their scoring on the PAI during the course. Though subjective, the visual does show the approximate distribution of participants' political interest and activity prior to the course.



**Figure 5.1 Participants' Political Interest and Activity**

In summary, prior to NURS 420, the majority of participants lacked knowledge about political processes and policy making and mostly avoided political processes in general. About 43% of participants had varying levels of experience and interest in political processes with some experiencing limitations in their political activities due to the multiple demands of their lives and nursing education program. In the next section, participants' preconceptions about nursing are illustrated.

#### Preconceptions about Nursing

When participants talked about how their views about political processes and policy making changed from pre- to post-course, they framed their outlooks through both personal and nursing lenses. Surprisingly, they changed in how they viewed the nursing discipline. Pre-course views of nursing emerged in two categories with thirteen participants (93%) expressing traditional views about nursing at the start of the course. Preconceptions about nursing included: 1) viewing nursing traditionally; and 2) rejecting traditional nursing narrative.

Viewing Nursing Traditionally. Thirteen (93%) participants expressed ideas at course start that held to what they called a “traditional view” of nursing. They adhered to the idea that nursing was largely practiced on “floors” referring to nurses working mostly in hospitals with ill patients. Taylor said, “...this is bad to say, but you think of the doctors as having a lot of the power and that nurses just follow through with kind of what they want.” Casey and Jesse said they had a “much narrower view” of nursing prior to taking NURS 420. Jesse said, “advocating for the patient is extremely important” and Casey saw nursing as “basically...advocating for patients maybe in the hospital-type situation.” Jesse characterized advocacy as “trying to get them [patients] certain help” in hospitals or communities. Both conceived of advocacy in nurses’ roles within a traditional inpatient setting where nurses mostly cared for ill patients.

Pat spoke more bluntly: “I currently don’t see how that [course political topics] relates to working as an RN... they’re skills to learn for management kind of things...not working the floor wiping butts kinds of things.” Her view of nursing’s proper sphere was technical, skill-based, hands-on, patient care in hospitals. Chris changed disciplines from business to nursing and said, “I just thought ‘oh, nursing...I’ll take care of people’.” Her focus on taking care of patients led her to overlook the potential that health care organizations could be political as were her previous workplaces. And Casey admitted the views she held about nursing’s traditional roles left her feeling hesitant about owning her new profession. One week’s class topic on power and image led her to disclose, “I wasn’t always necessarily proud to say that [admit she’s becoming a nurse]. I know that sounds silly but I wasn’t.”

It was evident participants' views of the nursing profession were part of their context for learning upon starting the course. These perceptions provided an important filter for making sense of course ideas and intertwined with participants' political learning as the course progressed.

Rejecting Traditional Nursing Narrative. One participant was an outlier in terms of how he viewed nursing at the start of the course. Jordan said, "Basically it's [nursing] a really big group of people that has tremendous potential power there but is not using it." He described himself as "not your standard issue person that's going through this program" because he was interested in political processes and topics and thought nurses "...might need to learn how to think differently, learn how to use leadership and less followership." Jordan knew of his peers' traditional view of nursing saying many of them came into the program already holding these views about the profession. He had past experiences with peers telling him he needed to tone down his opinions if he wanted to be a nurse, but he persisted in speaking out and was glad to be in a class where his ideas and opinions mattered.

#### Preconceptions about Nursing Connections to Politics and Policy Making

Preconceptions discussed prior to this section focused on participants' pre-course views on politics and on nursing separately. Prior to taking NURS 420, many participants never saw nursing and politics as connected in any way, shape, or form. The next section describes participants' preconceptions about nursing connections to politics and policy making. Their preconceptions included: 1) seeing a partial or potential nursing connection; 2) tucking info away while focusing on jobs; and 3) not connecting nursing and politics.

Seeing a Partial or Potential Nursing Connection to Politics. Seven participants (50%) saw a partial or potential connection between nursing and political processes at the course outset. Jordan said nursing was “...not getting that seat next to the president’s desk when all the big stuff is coming through...it’s being marginalized for whatever reason. I think that’s what this class is getting into.” Terry stated, “I knew it was important for nurses to be politically active but I didn’t realize...how much impact they had...in decision-making within the state legislature and all of that.”

Jesse said, “I certainly would not have seen nursing... advocating in front of Congress”; however, she did consider participation in organizational or business processes in a workplace as part of nursing’s role. Pat had similar ideas: “there’s lots of politics in nursing but it’s usually facility-related... it wouldn’t maybe have occurred to me to talk about government-related politics.” She saw relevance in learning how to get ahead within systems in nursing workplaces.

Casey, Leslie, and Kelly linked nurses’ political activity to what was most obvious to them: “[The] hospital health care system affects us as nurses and our patients,” said Casey, “we should be involved... advocating in that realm.” Kelly knew “health reform” was political. Leslie thought nursing’s professional associations were connected to political processes, “but that’s really, really all I knew. I didn’t know anything beyond that.”

Tucking Info Away while Focusing on Jobs. Chris and Pat saw nursing and political processes as “future stuff” (Chris), which one could “learn and use at a later time in my life” (Pat). To them, political learning was not immediately relevant to getting nursing jobs in hospitals: “[W]hat I hear is the ‘go get your med[ical]-surg[ical]

experience and then branch out', so a lot of what we learned in... class, while very interesting, is something that you sort of have to tuck away in a back folder, and if you like, break it out later," said Pat. They perceived their learning through the lens of their more immediate goals of getting nursing jobs in a traditional setting.

Not Connecting Nursing and Politics at All. Five participants (36%) did not see any connection between nursing and political processes at the start of the course. Jan expressed the sentiments of many of these participants: "I never really made the connection... back then before the class, of how much nursing and politics goes hand in hand."

Prior to starting NURS 420, some participants had limited views of nursing limiting politics to being organizational, related to in-patient advocacy, or health reform. However, most participants, even those seeing a potential or partial connection, tended to say they never viewed nursing and political processes, particularly public policy processes as connected in any way. These views contrasted with how participants viewed these areas at the conclusion of the course.

#### Perceiving Political Processes Differently

All participants reported they perceived politics differently at course end than at course beginning. They described: 1) Deepening their understanding and/or re-charging political views; 2) changing their view of politics and political processes; 3) gaining a sense of self as actors in political processes; and 4) feeling more confident but still hesitant about future action.



### Deepening Understanding/Re-charging Political Views

Casey and Jordan were interested in political processes prior to the course yet found new awareness by course end. Casey said, “I do think it...was a good thing because I had become pretty... disheartened with the political process in the United States...it was getting more faith in the actual system and made me have that second look and politicians are just people.” She said, the course “...compelled me to finally join SNA... and I also went ahead and applied for Sigma Theta Tau honor society, which before I...wouldn’t have probably.” She added, “it really did influence me as far as the importance of nurses being involved in policy and politics.”

Jordan felt the course “reconfirmed” his previous knowledge but “helped me also, to... improve my point of view on the political process—the politics of a small group or the politics of a working group, or politics of an organization new information.” He identified being surprised at citizen accessibility in state level public policy as well as feeling a shift in his point of view about politics in general: “...this is how humans get things done... politics is not necessarily a negative thing. It’s a normal function of an organization.”

### Changing Views of Politics and Political Processes

Participants who had not been active or interested in political processes pre-course expressed changed perceptions after taking the course. Taylor stated, “I definitely don’t associate politics negatively anymore like I used to because you can have so much impact and...it’s great to be aware of what’s going on.” Sidney previously avoided politics because it seemed so charged with conflict: “I think I kind of have more of an open mind to it [politics]...I now find it a little bit more interesting too.”

Kelly learned, “it [politics] was broader than I realized and I always just thought... of Congress and...didn’t really think about... local and organizational political processes.” Taylor recognized, “...many places are run by politics and government, even...places that we work, like the hospitals... have their own politics that go on. And, if you want to see changes you have to be willing to... advocate for those changes and usually that’s through a political process.”

#### Gaining a Sense of Self in Political Processes

Language used by participants to describe new insights also included realization of their own capabilities to act in the political realm. Kim said, “you don’t have to hold a high political stance to come in and say ‘hey, this is why I don’t think this should be passed’ and I think that...was great for me to see because it made me realize ‘hey, I can be a part of this too’... that was pretty awesome.” This recognition of empowerment was an “aha” moment for Kelly: “...it’s not like it’s just these people that are super politically savvy-- they’re not born that way...anybody can become involved.” Chris identified her personal talent: “...public speaking...and going to these public testimonies I thought...’I could do that’...and as nurses, we’re...people that hopefully they will listen to, you know?” Talking is still a distance from actively getting up to testify, however, verbalizing she had skills she could use in combination with nursing talents in the political arena was important for Chris to see a personal connection to political processes.

#### Feeling More Confident but Still Being Hesitant

Jan and Leslie gained confidence and skills in the course but also identified their pre-course political knowledge to be minimal. Their political journey was longer than

other participants who may have felt more confident about political learning at the outset of the course. Jan said, "...all these things that are going on... *do* affect me and effect the patients that I care for, how I care for them...and so I definitely follow what's going on a lot more." She added, "...if I ever felt... that I had enough knowledge to come forward and help in a certain situation, you know, to be a speaker or to answer questions...as a nurse *I would...I would.*" Leslie, too, recognized her growth: "I am more interested in... bettering my knowledge and being more educated to provide that advocacy for patients." She went on, "I guess I still don't know, exactly where I stand on everything [on political issues]." Both she and Jan expressed a need to know "100%" which is in reality, an unattainable standard. Fear of making a mistake and not being right lurks behind these statements. Future mentoring through political participation would benefit students like these.

In summary, there were positive changes in how participants viewed political processes with many realizing processes of democracy were for all people. Participants named specific ways in which they could participate in future with some recognizing growth but with hesitancy and fear of making mistakes.

### Expanding Notions of Nursing

All participants reported having a broader, wider view of nursing and its possibilities than they had when entering the course. Changes in their views of nursing included: 1) seeing more options; 2) understanding the meaning of professional; 3) identifying nurses change efforts; 4) realizing nurses have power; and 5) being part of the whole.

The following table illustrates these changed views with themes expressed by select participants.

**Table 5.2 Expanding Notions of Nursing.**

<b>Expanding Notions of Nursing</b>
--Seeing more options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping more people with knowledge (Jesse)</li> <li>• Opening whole new door in class (Lee)</li> <li>• Changing from what nursing was thought to be to what nursing really is (Jordan)</li> </ul>
--Understanding meaning of professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internalizing 'professional' as self-reality (Casey)</li> <li>• Having bigger picture of profession (Kelly)</li> <li>• Generating professional pride and collegiality (Leslie)</li> </ul>
--Seeing nurses' change efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciating policy change efforts [of nurses at work] more now (Kim)</li> <li>• Making a difference as a nurse is possible (Terry)</li> <li>• Viewing positive nursing testimony [in policy meeting] (Jesse)</li> </ul>
--Realizing nurses have power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using difference [in nurses &amp; their views] to benefit each other (Jesse)</li> <li>• Opening my eyes to nursing's power within themselves (Taylor)</li> <li>• Needing more of this thinking in nursing [political] (Jordan)</li> </ul>
--Being part of the greater whole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing self-involvement in work organization in future (Robin)</li> <li>• Acting in larger scope beyond one on one patient care (Terry)</li> </ul>

Select participant quotes are presented in the next section to further illustrate each theme.

### Seeing More Options

Seeing more options for both themselves and nurses generally was one outcome of the course. Lee said, “[the course] just opened up this whole new door.” Jordan stated, “[we’re] now learning that...nursing’s a much more responsible thing...it’s not just reading what the doctor wrote and then going and doing it, and holding a patient’s hand... you’re throwing at [us] what nursing’s going to be.”

### Understanding Meaning of “Professional”

Casey’s had an “aha” moment about what being a professional meant to her personally: “...just the fact that we’re professionals and we can be involved...I’ve never had that awareness before.... everyone goes ‘OK it’s a profession’, but it wasn’t a reality for me.” She added, “...we’d be talking about all of these issues...it just made the role of the nurse seem so much larger and actually more respectable.”

### Seeing Nurses’ Change Efforts

For participants like Kim, seeing nurses’ change efforts promoted a bigger view of nursing. Kim said, “I really admire and look up to some of the nurses that I work with now that...really push for change in the hospital and I want to be a part of that.” This reflected her new appreciation for what she saw nurses doing at work to make positive changes in the environment and for patient care. Prior to the course, she did not understand what they were doing or why. Having taken the course deepened her appreciation of the effort and skill it took for these nurses to push for change.

### Realizing Nurses Have Power

Taylor’s new insights centered on the realization that nurses do indeed have power. She said, “when she [Sullivan] starts talking about...the power that nurses have and just their natural ability to lead and be trusted by...the people that they’re working with. I...started ...being able to tie it in to how we’re in a really good position to be influential.” She began to see nursing’s unique knowledge and perspective as something valuable to others who were making decisions in health care. Jordan challenged nursing

education to promote different thinking in nurses: “I really think we need more of this kind of thinking [political] embedded into the nursing programs.”

#### Being Part of the Greater Whole

Robin described herself as a complete political novice at the beginning of the course. For her, seeing herself as a part of the larger organization at her workplace was a completely new insight. She said, “you’re not *just* a floor nurse, you know, you should become part of the organization and go to voluntary committee meetings. I’m probably going to get into it a little bit more that way.”. Terry also said, “...it was really motivating to me and encouraging to me that I can make a difference as a nurse in...in the larger scope, [along with] one on one patient care.”

In summary, participants largely held traditional views of nursing at the start of the course. By course end, they widened their conceptions of nursing as a discipline gaining insights about nurses functioning in roles they had not previously considered. In addition, many could translate what these insights meant to their personal career goals.

#### Recognizing Politics Is Part of Nursing

All participants made connections between nursing and political processes and began to move toward recognition of political processes as part of nursing by course end. Their insights included: 1) seeing nursing-political connections; 2) speaking up for change; 3) connecting health and patient care to political processes; 4) experiencing professional associations and groups; and 5) identifying workplaces as political environments for nurses.

The following table lists participants’ insights in these four areas.

**Table 5.3 Recognizing Politics is Part of Nursing.**

<b>Recognizing Politics is Part of Nursing</b>
<p>Seeing nursing-political connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realizing how much nursing can be involved in policy making was biggest “aha” (Lee)</li> <li>• Seeing political world is part of nursing since taking this class (Kim)</li> <li>• Broadening horizons of view related to nursing and politics (Taylor)</li> <li>• Using skills to be nursing politicians (Casey)</li> </ul>
<p>Speaking up for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding political thinking in nursing (Jordan)</li> <li>• Realizing importance of being a nursing voice to legislators (Jan)</li> </ul>
<p>Connecting health &amp; patient care to political processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing lack of medical &amp; health knowledge [in decision-makers] (Jesse)</li> <li>• Going to hearings to speak as a nurse (Terry)</li> <li>• Impacting patients and her care of them (Jan)</li> </ul>
<p>Experiencing professional associations and groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making NSNA and policy real (Leslie)</li> <li>• Compelling her to join SNA (Casey)</li> </ul>
<p>Identifying workplaces as political environments for nursing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaping her future work environment (Jan)</li> <li>• Doing this [being on committees at work] is important (Kelly)</li> <li>• Using Evidence-based practice (EBP) and making change (Sidney)</li> </ul>

### Seeing Nursing-Political Connections

Lee said, “my most giant “aha” moment was...realizing how much nursing can be involved with policy and politics.” Casey said, “I think I had a really narrow focus on what topics...nurses could be involved with...and because of our professional skills and everything...we could really actually be policy makers and involved in politics at any level.”

### Speaking Up for Change

Kim stated, “it [the course] made me realize that if you really believe in something, and if you really want something to be better or to stop something, that you *can* speak up, you know?” Influencing policy change was a part of nursing, and she

gained awareness that she didn't have to be a manager or "higher up" in organizational processes to influence processes. She went on, "...and so, that's what really struck me... it made me realize that you don't have to feel afraid or feel like you don't have enough knowledge." Taylor said, "...you can have so much impact and...it's great to be aware of what's going on. And it's a duty that we have, and we should know what's going on so we can...be up to speed and...let our voices be heard."

#### Connecting Health and Patient Care to Policy

Taylor described the meeting she attended: "...the public hearing about no smoking in public parks... I remember thinking as a nurse 'that's perfect' because you associate smoking with health, and it just comes into play into so many different arenas where we can use our knowledge...to really advocate for other people... I guess I've really made that connection."

Jordan said, "Doctor says do this, OK. Well, no, no...maybe that's the wrong thing to do, so by building these skills—these politics skills, these communication skills, these leadership skills, these will empower...nurses to do what's best, to be a better patient advocate."

#### Experiencing Professional Associations and Groups

Leslie's experience through the student nursing association and attending the national convention helped her ground her course learning, making "everything com[e] together" for her about working within professional associations. Casey found the class "did inspire me and make me want to be more involved and kind of see what it takes if I got involved."



### Identifying Workplaces as Political Environments for Nurses

Jan said she was “...following a lot of the events going on both nationally and internationally, which I think is very helpful, because it all shapes... the environment that I’m gonna be working in and the pay I’m getting... my opinion and my knowledge that I have could definitely be beneficial as all these decisions are being made.” Kelly identified, “...as soon as I’m able...if I stay at my current employer, I’m gonna try to get involved with more of the committees” like the safety committee and medication committee at her workplace, which she thought would benefit from a nursing voice.

In summary, participants described changes in their way of viewing nursing and politics and were able to see connections and relevance of nursing to political processes and policy making. Becoming Political is a personal as well as professional journey. Without addressing and exploring personal and professional values and beliefs about political ideas and participation, there is likely to be slow progress getting nurses to political and policy tables. Through course processes of Engaging in Learning Together, these undergraduate nursing students seemed to develop insights and beginning skills for nursing practice in political arenas. Chapter Seven discusses the findings and conclusions of this study and explains the significance of these for nursing education and the discipline.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, a brief summary of the study is presented. Conclusions are drawn with connection to relevant literature. The strengths and limitations of the research are delineated. Implications for my personal teaching practice, program, and policy are described along with the significance of the research for nursing education. Finally, new questions are raised for future exploration and concluding remarks are made.

### **Summary**

The aim of this study was to learn how undergraduate nursing students' in NURS 420 made sense of civic engagement concepts like policy making and political advocacy and integrated their understandings into their evolving nursing selves. Because teachers are intimately involved with students in co-creating meaningful learning, it was important for me to do this research and include my perspective as co-participant in the students' learning process. Exploring my students' processes for learning political advocacy in a course aimed at increasing this knowledge, skills, and disposition increased my understanding of participants' pre and post-course perceptions, what they learned about political and policy processes, whether they saw themselves as political actors, and how they made sense of course concepts in light of their emerging roles as nurses.

The study also deepened my understanding about how a blended online course environment and interaction with others contributed to course learning. Participants were engaged and their active involvement with course ideas, each other, and the instructor

helped them learn deeply. The study yielded rich context and data to inductively derive the major finding, Engaging in Learning Together, a substantive theory of undergraduate nursing students' political learning. This theory will inform my teaching and learning with future students as I continue to teach this course and has implications for course and curricular decisions in my nursing school. The ultimate aim in using the theory is to foster a disposition in undergraduate students toward active civic engagement in communities and the use of their knowledge and skills of political processes and policy making in their professional nursing roles.

The study has potential, in similar contexts, for guiding nurse educators' curricular and pedagogical decisions, course design, and teaching strategies when teaching policy making and political advocacy to undergraduate nursing students. It may encourage other teacher researchers to study their students' learning in their own settings. It raises questions about civic engagement learning for undergraduate and graduate students and the potential impact on graduates' future nursing practice.

### **Study Conclusions**

Conclusions cluster in three major areas: 1) Engaging in Learning Together emerged as a substantive theory of learning for undergraduate nursing participants' political and policy learning in NURS 420; 2) Participants engaged with peers, the instructor and others in a blended online course environment at a level that contributed to deep learning and strengthened habits of learning; and 3) Embedding civic engagement learning within a disciplinary focus provided a positive context for professional formation and fostered development of participants' knowledge, skills, and disposition for political and policy advocacy work in the profession.

### Engaging in Learning Together

Engaging in Learning Together, a theory describing nursing students' political learning, begins to address a gap in nursing education literature. It is consistent with constructivist philosophy underpinning the pedagogies of engagement and instructional decisions used in teaching the NURS 420 course. Pedagogies of Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003), communities of learning in online environments (Garrison et al., 2001; Rovai, 2007; Rovai et al., 2004), peer review and writing (Gottschalk & Hjortshoj, 2004), and civic engagement (Colby et al, 2007; Jacoby, 2009) are based on substantial research in teaching and learning. Use of these pedagogies led to intended outcomes for civic learning, collaborative learning, and writing development. The theory of participants' learning makes sense in light of the course objectives and goals (Appendix A).

Engaged learning in this theory does appear to be *both* an end and a means consistent with definitions by Kuh (2003) and Chickering and Gamson (1991). The reinforcing spiral of engagement expressed by participants in Push Starting Learning, Doing the Work, and Learning Online Together immersed them in course ideas through reading, writing and discussion. As they did course activities and engaged with one another and the instructor to learn, their interest grew and they had reinforcement of their learning. The process of Making it Real brought experiential learning into the mix increasing participants' connections to political processes and ideas in real world, personal ways that they could integrate with their nursing personas.

Recently, attempts to more fully define learning engagement have surfaced in the literature. Bowen (2005) described engagement in four ways: 1) "engagement with the

learning process,” which involves *how* to get students more engaged in their own learning; 2) “engagement with the object of study,” which connects students with *new ideas and topics*; 3) “engagement with contexts,” which draws students to consider the embedded social, cultural, and ethical *contexts* related to the object of study; and 4) “engagement with the *human condition*” in all its interactional, contextual, and practical dimensions (p. 4). Schreiner (2010b) and Kahu (2011) identified learning engagement holistically as having intellectual, social, and emotional components. Participants in this study appeared to demonstrate this holistic engagement, expressing control of their own learning process, involvement with others, and expression of emotional, affective feelings about the learning. Student satisfaction has been linked to instructors’ caring practices when teaching online (Benjamin & Ostrow, 2008) and to experiencing gratifying, deep learning (Atherton, 2011). Participants’ satisfaction seemed to be a genuine expression of how they felt about their experience of learning and was as much an expression of satisfaction with their own achievement as with course or instruction.

Scheiner (2010b) identified three factors inherent in engaged learning: “meaningful processing, focused attention and active participation” (p. 4). This was demonstrated by participants in their descriptions of activities and how they made sense of them in light of their new understandings of political processes and the meaning of those in the context of their lives and discipline. The spiral, synergistic pattern of learning exhibited by participants is also consistent with Musil’s developmental, braided Civic Learning Spiral (2009). Fundamental in this model of civic learning is the principle of self in ongoing relationship with others. Participants exhibited this in Learning Online Together, seeing their relationships and discussions with each other and the instructor as

essential in constructing the meaning of political ideas with nursing. They made strides in their political learning. The course was one moment in a life journey of on-going civic and professional development, consistent with the developmental view in the Civic Learning Spiral (Musil, 2009).

As a result of this study and the processes exhibited in the theory of Engaging in Learning Together, a definition of engaged learning is proposed. *Engaged learning* is a promotive, synergistic learning process involving self, peers, teachers, and/or others, which requires investment of one's physical and mental capabilities along with a positive commitment of spirit and energy. Put simply, it is learning in relationship with others that involves head, hands, and heart. This definition leads to the second major finding, which is that learning in relationship together appeared to strengthen habits of learning in participants.

### Strengthening Habits of Learning

Participants' descriptions of learning processes revealed they learned from reading course texts and materials, talking with one another and the instructor in weekly online discussions, writing in authentic genres to develop political and policy communication skills, and experiencing political activities and policy meetings for themselves in real community contexts. The combination of class-based, theoretical online learning with face-to-face experiential activities promoted their learning engagement as the course progressed as well as led to more meaningful, deep learning during at the end of the course. This is consistent with meta-analytic research on blended online learning, which identified stronger, more effective learning over traditional classroom and totally online courses (Means et al., 2009). Students in online or blended

online courses had better performance and stronger effect sizes when compared to those in traditional classrooms but researchers also noted it was not necessarily the delivery medium causing the result but could have been the pedagogies, instructional strategies and longer time spent on task that influenced the results. This was also noted in a meta-analysis by Bernard et al. (2004) who concluded pedagogy selection, use and enactment, “pedagogical excellence”, was required for successful learning in distance delivery modes (p. 413). In this study, participants learned from course activities like reading, writing and discussion but these had to first be mindfully and intentionally designed, positioned carefully within the course and artfully enacted by the instructor.

Scheiner (2010b) noted students could be taught how to engage more deeply in their own learning. This ranged from teaching academic study skills to helping them re-frame learning from a “fixed mindset” to a “growth mindset” (p. 7). Helping students move from a “this is just the way I am” or “I only learn this way” stance to one of taking charge and investing time and effort to reap learning rewards can be promoted pedagogically. Doing this helps them grow and develop skills they use beyond the individual course experience. In addition to gaining writing skills during NURS 420, participants developed communication and collaboration skills, which seemed to increase their proclivity to cooperate with others to learn. This was not only important during the course but important for their future professional experiences as team members. Strengthening communication and collaborative habits of learning was also consistent with positive outcomes in civic engagement for developing skills of working together on issues in communities (Colby et al., 2007; Jacoby, 2009).

Connecting personally through the processes of Doing the Work, Making it Real, and Learning Online Together was another way deep learning was fostered and participants' habits of learning were strengthened. Powell and Lines (2010) identified four components involved in helping college students connect more personally to learning: 1) helping students to understand and work in community with each other; 2) assisting students to appreciate diversity in a broad sense; 3) utilizing reflection as a pedagogical strategy; and 4) facilitating engagement with instructors. These components were present in participants' learning processes, and they identified specifically how writing and discussion on discussion boards helped them make sense of political ideas and nursing. Even though participants were a fairly homogeneous group by gender and ethnicity, all identified the diverse perspectives shared on discussion boards to be significant in helping them learn about political topics. Some thought experiencing that multi-perspectival diversity on discussion boards as important for professional decision making and teamwork for quality patient care in their futures.

Participants identified that instructor participation contributed in several important ways to their learning. First, they felt the design and structure of the course provided clear direction for assignments, course navigation, and accomplishing course goals. Numerous studies of online learning have demonstrated the particular importance of clarity and organization for online learning due to the lack of immediate face-to-face contact with the instructor and reduced visual cues (Rovai et al., 2006; Rovai & Wighting, 2005; Sitzman & Leners, 2006).

Participants also seemed to feel an environment of positive concern and high expectations was created, which contributed to their success. This is consistent with



results of NSSE research, which found college students' engaged learning was fostered through faculty-student interactions conveying high expectations and getting feedback promptly (Kuh, 2001, 2003). Participants perceived they were valued and had important contributions to make that would benefit both their own and others' learning in the course. They also felt instructor involvement in discussions assisted them to deepen and extend their thinking and compared this to other online courses they had taken where there was little to no instructor engagement in discussion boards. These perceptions mirrored findings in a study of nursing students' perceptions of instructors' caring practices in online courses (Sitzman & Leners, 2006) where the teacher's level of "commitment to learning" (p. 257) was seen as important. Actions like reading students' postings and participating in online discussions were demonstrations of teachers' caring in online classes. Sitzman and Leners (2006) noted the "reciprocal" nature of caring (p. 258), which was also conveyed in participants' statements in this study as they thought instructor involvement in discussion boards and engagement in the course contributed to increasing their own levels of investment in learning.

Participants' high levels of engagement in course activities and connecting personally with ideas appeared to lead to deeper and more satisfying learning. They perceived the instructor's level of involvement, caring practices, and course design as important in their success. These strengthened habits of learning contributed to participants' evolving views of themselves as professionals, which leads to the third finding, professional formation through civic engagement. This is discussed in the next section.

### Promoting Professional Formation through Civic Engagement Education

Participants expressed changed perceptions from pre- to post-course about politics, becoming more open to political ideas and increasing their knowledge about political processes and policy making. They also readily identified specific ways in which nursing and political processes were connected to patient care, health policy, and more. Participants responded positively overall to political and policy learning provided within a disciplinary lens even when they were disinterested or averse to politics at the course beginning.

Becoming political is a process not accomplished within a single political experience or civic engagement course. However, college experiences can be pivotal in contributing to a students' civic journey (Colby et al., 2007). Developing a disposition to think and act politically involves developing a sense of political efficacy involving both internal and external components. *External political efficacy* is related to one's sense of how responsive government is to what people want. *Internal political efficacy* is different—it is the individual's belief about one's personal capacity and ability to participate and act politically (Colby et al., 2007). Prior to NURS 420, several participants expressed negative beliefs and values about politics generally and had doubts about their own knowledge and capacity to participate. At course end, more openness towards politics and knowledge about specific actions, which could be taken as individuals and nurses were identified by participants, suggesting increased development of internal political efficacy. Some participants also identified greater awareness and interest in following current events and health issues as a result of taking the course. This behavior is related to political motivation (Colby et al., 2007).

Consistent with college students' political learning in the Political Engagement Project (PEP) (Colby et al., 2007), participants in this study described gains in discussing political ideas and controversial topics with peers and the instructor, identified greater understanding of legitimate sources of information and knowledge of how to use information, strengthened their written communication through the Advocacy Paper, and increased their appreciation of collaborative work. A few participants reported specific actions they took such as registering to vote, joining professional organizations, running for a student association office, and speaking to managers in workplaces about joining committees.

Participants identified their learning was personal and meaningful to them. Making sense of political ideas within the context of personal and professional frames of reference contributed to their ability to understand and find relevance. Bruner (1996) identified humans' capacities for making ideas and information meaningful through narrative thinking, a holistic way of seeing and interpreting within a context of what is known and experienced. Through the narrative of living and constructing one's own story, individuals interpret and construct meaning and integrate new learning more effectively and deeply. Sullivan and Rosin (2008) and Benner et al. (2010) identified this way of learning and thinking as important to *professional formation*, the capacity to think and act in one's discipline. Through discussion with peers and the instructor, reflection, writing, and reading, participants began to incorporate political ideas into their personal and emerging nursing professional selves. They did this by incorporating learning into their personal and professional stories of self in an evolving journey of becoming political. One part of professional formation is ethical comportment, which includes

“*civic professionalism*” (Benner et al., 2010, p. 205). This is the development of the knowledge, skills, and disposition to influence policy processes in organizations, systems, and government, which is consistent with participants’ experience in NURS 420. Developing a civic outlook as a nursing professional also seemed to change participants’ views of nursing itself, which is further discussed in the next section.

### Changing the Traditional Meme of Nursing

A surprising outcome of participants’ learning was that they experienced a change from the traditional way they previously envisioned nursing to a different and broader view of the discipline. Some had more deeply internalized and more positive understanding of professional responsibilities, which included political work. Their learning contributed to their on-going formation about the profession as they integrated information in a personally meaningful way into their own narratives of their evolving nursing selves. This process could be the beginning of changing a meme about nursing.

*Memes* are patterned sequences and scripts of thoughts and behaviors that can be replicated and passed on to other humans (Blackmore, 2008; Giroux, Taylor, & Cooren, 1998). They are memory patterns that can be spread and reproduced (Heylighen, 2001). Memes and their study, memetics, are from anthropology. These complex organizational patterns help to genetically encode patterns of thought and action in the collective memory of social and cultural situations in populations. The traditional conceptualization of nursing as caregiver of ill patients in inpatient settings, primarily hospitals, can be conceived of as a meme in nursing and society. Memes are powerful and persist over time, an example being nursing seen by society and students as caregivers of people who are ill and cared for in hospitals. In this study, two participants accepted and internalized

this meme, and it appeared to conflict with their perception of the applicability of course concepts in their view of nursing. However, twelve participants related a perception change with expanded understanding of nursing after taking the course. Could courses such as NURS 420 contribute to changing the long-standing, traditionally-conceptualized view of nursing? Could it cause enough of a disruptive cognitive moment for students to foster different thinking about professional nurses' roles? And, could this expanded view of nursing connecting to political ideas and processes help these participants begin to *normalize* political practice as part of formation from the beginning of their careers as professional nurses?

This study was not designed to explore these questions but they are intriguing. Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) offers a way to understand and explain dramatic shifts in perspective that sometimes occur in learning (Mezirow, 1995, 1997). It addresses how students undergo "...the most significant kind of knowledge transformation: paradigm shift, also known as perspective transformation" (McGonigal, 2005, p. 1). Construction of an "activating event" or disorienting dilemma aids in learning transformation which helps students see limits in their current thinking. Perhaps the NURS 420 course provided a disorienting moment in participants' nursing education, allowing space for new thinking about a narrative they previously accepted as truth, the traditional way of viewing nursing. The two participants who thought course ideas were important for sometime "in the future" but not for their use in their traditional nursing roles may have needed more time, discussion about their career goals, or additional experiential learning before they could shift their viewpoints. The majority of the participants, however, *may go forward* in their nursing journey with foundational ideas

about the deliberate use of the nursing self as civically engaged with communities to work toward health.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

#### Strengths

This research begins to address a gap in the nursing education literature as to how undergraduate nursing students' learn about political advocacy and policy making. The theory was inductively derived from data from participants' perceptions of their learning in one nursing policy course. It reflects one perspective of fourteen participants' processes of learning in this particular course as interpreted and constructed by myself as teacher researcher. Rich context and thick description portrays participants' reflective, qualitative experience of the learning journey within a month of completing the course. Prolonged immersion in data and analysis over sixteen months provided time for thoughtful examination and consideration of findings. Member checks with participants provided verification the theory was consistent with their learning. Critical review by peers verified consistency with their experiences of teaching nursing students similar course concepts in online environments.

#### Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study: 1) Findings are context-specific and subject to multiple interpretations depending on readers' perspectives; 2) Findings are based primarily on one major source of data, participant interviews, with support from course documents; 3) Findings are filtered through the perspectives of the researcher and participants, which includes biases and power discrepancies between

teachers and students; and 4) Findings are limited due to homogeneity by gender, ethnicity, and sample size.

#### Context-Specific Interpretation and Application

Findings are from participants from one specific course in one location and so the most immediate application and relevance is to me as instructor, to students in my courses, and for programmatic and curricular decisions in my school of nursing. The findings may be applicable to contexts with similar students, faculty, and settings. Instructors who teach political and policy concepts using different pedagogies and in different course contexts, such as in a live classroom, will likely have different experiences of teaching and learning. Like all qualitative research, findings are subject to multiple interpretations dependent on the interpretive lenses of readers.

#### Interviews as Primary Data Source

Participant interviews were the primary data source for this study with support from course documents, including syllabi, faculty essays, course grades, etc., e-mail communications between participants and the instructor, and teacher notes taken during the conduct of the course. The theory emerged largely from participants' self reports of their learning in the course. Originally, course BlackBoard® discussion transcripts were included in study design but their inclusion would have significantly lengthened the time to complete the research. BlackBoard® transcript analysis and inclusion would strengthen findings by comparing the actual conduct of the participants' discussions in their discussion boards with interview data potentially providing further verification of the theory. I am currently conducting research using participants' discussion board

transcripts to see if the theoretical concepts apply within the context of these discussions. This should provide triangulatory support and further opportunity to refine theoretical concepts.

### Biases and Power Issues

Researcher and participant biases influence the findings of this study. Though I bracketed and set aside my preconceptions about my teaching and students' learning in the course, my perspective influenced the interpretation and presentation of data and results. My passion for good teaching and learning and the subject area are lenses influencing my work as a researcher. I was a co-participant in teaching and learning in the course and have my perception of the course's unfolding, which may not be fully reflected in the data itself. For instance, I read all discussion board transcripts during teaching of the course and cannot erase my impressions of those discussions from my mind. I could only write memos about them and be aware during all stages of the research.

Participants may have felt subtle pressure to answer questions in "right" ways in order to be "good" students or "good" citizens. While I often re-worded questions during interviews or asked them again later in interviews to give every opportunity for participants to reflect, revise, or add more to their answers, they could still have been influenced by my role as teacher and their roles as students, feeling a power imbalance in our relationship. An example of this may have occurred when I asked about what helped or hindered their learning. Participants tended to more easily list "helps" for learning. They may have felt it would be taken as criticism if "hindrances" were named. I found I asked about hindrances in multiple ways during interviews, often asking for suggestions



for improvement as a way to elicit hindrances or barriers. Asking about these later in the interview after participants became more comfortable talking also helped get more genuine responses.

#### Characteristics of Participants in the Sample

Findings would be strengthened if there had been more male students and more students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the study. Nursing is still predominantly female-gendered, and there were few male students in the senior class and who took the online section of the course. One student claimed an ethnic heritage other than Caucasian in the study. Findings may differ and/or could be extended by sampling other classes and increasing the sample size to verify conceptual accuracy.

It is possible participants may have been students who were pre-disposed to engage in their learning even without the course activities and instructor practices designed for engaged learning. They may have been more confident about speaking out, taking risks, participating in research, or had other characteristics that prompted them to participate in the study. Even with these limitations, there are important implications of the study for my teaching practice, the program within which it exists and for nursing education, which are described in the following section.

#### Implications and Significance

##### Implications for Personal Teaching Practice

Information from this research is being used to improve my own teaching with students and to enhance their learning in NURS 420. For instance, I have already added reflective activities near the end of the course for students to more specifically identify

political connections within inpatient, illness-focused care settings. In addition, I ask them to identify specific ways in which they might participate in political decisions in the organizations they hope to work in after graduation. Guest speakers from those types of facilities have been invited to share and model how they participated in unit decisions involving political change and resource allocation processes.

I have used participants' perspectives and voices from this study to help students in subsequent semesters see what the experience of the course is like, particularly in helping them understand that many students feel unsure at course outset and that investment of time and effort has personal payoffs and rewards. Another change I made was to invite students who completed the course to return the following semester to help orient students just beginning the course in a new semester.

I have found I can no longer view the course and my role as teacher in the same way as I did prior to conducting this research. I now perceive the course and its goals more easily from the students' point of view. While some findings from the research aligned with what I expected prior to doing the research, some things, like changes in participants' disciplinary views, surprised me, which was wonderful. The meme of "teaching" in higher education has changed for me as I have begun a transformational journey from that of teacher to being a teacher researcher. This study is the beginning of *my* professional formation as teacher researcher.

#### Implications for Nursing Program

In addition to personal implications, this study may provide evidence and justification for curricular and/or administrative policy decisions in our nursing program and university in relation to teaching for deep learning, particularly in blended online and

fully online learning contexts. An immediate implication for both me and my program has to do with workload recognition for faculty teaching fully online or blended online courses in the pre-licensure undergraduate program. Currently, an administrative decision about workload sets pre-licensure program didactic courses at a ratio of 1 instructor to 75 students. Options for faculty to teach classes via online or blended online modalities are limited unless one teaches them *without* receiving workload credit. I receive workload credit for teaching one 3-credit course with 75 students; but within the context of that course and workload allocation, I have chosen to offer the blended online option to approximately 21-28 students of the 75 total and do not receive workload recognition for the additional time required to teach online. It is increasingly difficult to teach for engagement as class size has increased. While I love teaching online and see benefits for students' learning as demonstrated in this study, I know how much time it takes me to teach high-quality online courses, and I do not know if I can continue teaching this way without workload recognition.

Evidence in literature and in this study supports pedagogies facilitating engaged learning, however, it takes additional time to *design and conduct* high-quality online and blended online classes that lead to deep and engaged learning. Faculty workload is increased in online and distance instruction. In her integrated review of nursing online education, Mancuso-Murphy (2007) cited “[an] average of 18 hours of faculty time [is required] to create 1 hour of internet instruction” (p. 256) with additional time required for design and/or consultation with technology experts. Her review of research in online nursing courses found online teaching “...create[d] “40%-50% more work than traditional courses” and “Developing a technology-based course consumes 22.5 hours per week per

course” (p. 256). Others studying online learning have also confirmed the time-intensive nature of designing and teaching high-quality courses. In a nationwide study of undergraduate nursing faculty who taught online, 85% reported they spent more than 30 hours developing a new online course and took more time to teach and deliver online courses than they spent on traditional live courses (Christianson, Tiene, & Luft, 2002). Mancuso (2009) identified nursing faculty workload as one of the biggest concerns in her integrative review of nursing faculty perceptions about distance education in nursing. In two separate studies, she reviewed nursing faculty mean time for conducting an on-going, already developed 3-credit online course was about eleven hours per week.

It takes more time to develop and teach online courses. However, another consideration is developing and teaching *high quality* online courses that promote *engaged learning*. Few studies have examined the time needed or taken by faculty to develop and/or teach online courses that are designed to foster deep learning. In fact, evidence in nursing education points to slow progress in advancing teaching for engaged, active learning (Benner et al., 2010; Tanner, 2010; Schaefer & Zygmunt, 2003). The nursing faculty shortage, heavy workloads, pressure to “cover” content, high enrollments, and lack of mentorship in pedagogy and curriculum contribute to decisions to continue to teach students using pedagogies that continue passive learning and reliance on testing (Aiken, 2011; Tanner, 2004, 2010).

There are ways to mitigate some of the challenges and time impacts by merging scholarship, teaching, and service interests so that they are more aligned and concentrated on a few rather than many community partners (Liazos & Liss, 2009). There is evidence that when institutional, programmatic, and community interests are congruent, faculty

receive more support for engagement activities and learning for students is strengthened overall (Jacoby & Hollander, 2009).

There are also ways to manage online courses to increase efficiency and use design proactively to create courses that minimize confusion and create clear pathways for students' learning. For instance, I keep copies of questions I post in one discussion board to extend thinking during the week's discussion and post them in other discussion boards if they are relevant. I watch for patterns of questions or misunderstandings in students' posts and questions and address them in regular e-mailed announcements as feedback for the entire class. I give routine group discussion board feedback about the quality of discussion and behaviors that will boost learning to a higher level and invite individual students' to e-mail, phone, drop by, or make appointments to discuss questions and concerns. I have learned to invest my time in discussion boards heavily in the first month of the semester because it seems to give students an early, consistent message of my involvement and engagement in their learning and subsequently leads to greater investment on their parts, which was confirmed by participants' statements in this research. By investing my time early, students "work up" and as suggested by this study's findings, they engage because learning is starting to get more interesting to them and they are receiving reinforcement for their efforts.

While faculty can be taught to teach for engaged learning and there are ways to help manage the time demands for those who teach online courses, nurse administrators and faculty must continue to work to find ways to make teaching for engaged learning a priority without faculty having to give their lives over to the significant time demands of 24/7 teaching and learning.

### Significance for Nursing Education

This research also has significance for nursing education. It contributes to a gap in nursing education about undergraduate students' political learning processes. It also extends existing nursing literature by adding rich evidence about undergraduate nursing students' learning in civic engagement and political advocacy in one blended online course. A foundation is provided for further research into how undergraduate and graduate students' learn these concepts and integrate them into their nursing practice. Nurses' practice in communities, organizations, and government may be strengthened if more purposeful teaching of policy making, political advocacy, and civic processes is incorporated into undergraduate nursing education.

### Mesh Civic Engagement with Disciplinary Outcomes

Participants in this study responded positively and learned when political and policy education was presented through a nursing lens. Civic education outcomes overlap with nursing education outcomes in many areas. In undergraduate nursing programs, this overlap most obviously occurs in service-learning clinical experiences. It can also occur in classrooms within professional concepts/issues, public/community health, leadership, and other courses. Some undergraduate programs are beginning to have stand alone policy courses. Civic engagement education could potentially be added in any course where learning outcomes for nursing education are congruent with those fostering civic education skills (Liazos & Liss, 2009; Spiezio et al., 2005; Zlotkowski, 2000). Learning how to engage communities and work together on common goals cannot only be done in tandem with a professional disciplinary focus but can reinforce the nursing professional's responsibility to also work together for the common good (Benner et al., 2010;

Diekelmann, Ironside, & Harlow, 2003; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008; Zlotkowski & Williams, 2003).

Integrating civic engagement education with disciplinary nursing knowledge creates the potential for increased student awareness of the interconnectedness of health and illness in social, cultural, political, economic, spiritual, and environmental realms. Incorporating distinct, frequent opportunities for gaining civic and political knowledge with practice in policy processes from the early stages of nurses' education may help them see these skills as being as fundamental to their nursing practice as taking vital signs. Engaging in civic and political processes and policy making may also assist policy makers and political figures to see nursing as legitimate policy workers, thereby helping to alleviate the problem of nurses' invisibility in public spheres. Civic education may also create more opportunities for nursing students to work in concert with members of other disciplines on issues of concern.

Developing students' skillful use of collaboration and communication skills in classrooms is an example illustrating the overlap of nursing education and civic education. Many nursing programs require students to examine disciplinary and daily ethical dilemmas, legal or moral issues, or controversy in areas of health and nursing practice (Benner et al., 2010). Extending the range of who students talk with to complete their assignments to include community representatives can bring in multiple perspectives that could be examined in light of disciplinary knowledge and practice decisions. This is one example among many possibilities for developing students' skills in both civic and nursing realms.

One participant, Jordan, felt nurses would be less marginalized and more powerful if political knowledge, skills, and risk-taking were more widely taught and promoted in undergraduate nursing curricula. This view was echoed in Burrage, Shattell, and Haberman (2005) who criticized traditional nursing curricula as fostering passive, adherence to rules, and minimizing risk-taking. Integrating civic engagement into nursing curricula provides a means for the concept of community engagement to become a central tenet of nursing and education. Learning in and with communities creates a notion of solidarity, of engagement in struggles together to make lives better and improve health “wherever people live, work, play, and pray” (Otterness, Gehrke, & Sener, 2007, p. 39). Civic engagement and education has the potential to open dialogue between faculty, students, and community members around issues of concern in their lives with mutual goals of educating nurses who are as comfortable in communities as they are in hospitals and other health settings. In addition, students may become nurses who are likely to have much more knowledge about organizational and system change and who can work to create cultures in health organizations that are much more open to and accepting of people in their communities.

The creation of learning experiences for civic engagement has the potential to democratize nursing education classrooms, facilitating more empowering learning, and decreasing experiences of uncivil behavior. Working on community problems, promoting change processes in organizations, and experiencing success while in undergraduate nursing education may motivate students to continue civic and participative change processes as graduates and on into their nursing careers. Increased political efficacy should beget more assertive and effective nursing civic professionals.



### Controversies around Civic Education and Teaching for Engagement

Civic engagement and education is not without its controversies. Faculty teaching civic education and using civic engagement pedagogies need to address the questions: Whose values? What conception of “good citizen” is envisioned? Faculty can use value statements of their universities, schools, and disciplines to help answer these questions and set boundaries within their classrooms. Faculty can also design classes and experiences that provide students some alternatives as to project choices (Welch, 2009). Some faculty fear civic engagement will detract from disciplinary knowledge and interfere with students having time to learn important content and study for professional examinations. These are legitimate concerns, however, evidence on deep, engaged learning points to success teaching essential conceptual skills and teaching students how to learn within their discipline (Benner et al., 2010; NSSE, 2003, 2009). Overall, there is potential to incorporate civic learning into nursing education in a way that benefits students in their evolving roles as members of the discipline and to foster their growth as civically engaged nursing professionals beginning in their basic nursing education.

### Future Research

Several questions are raised by this study. Most immediately, I wonder if participants’ course discussion board transcripts in NURS 420 demonstrate support for Engaging in Learning Together and its theoretical constructs? I have been granted sabbatical leave to do this research and together with this dissertation a strong foundation is laid for my future work in civic engagement and nursing education. I also am interested to explore whether graduates who have had the NURS 420 course are civically and/or politically engaged after they leave the university? Do they develop or continue

civic and/or political practices in their workplaces, organizations, or communities after they become practicing nurses, and, if so, how are those practices lived?

Do students in the live section of NURS 420 that I teach exhibit similar qualities of engagement and outcomes for political learning? Does Engaging in Learning Together have applicability in the NURS 420 course that exists in our online baccalaureate program for returning Registered Nurses? Could the theory be generally applicable in courses where concepts other than political and policy concepts are taught in order to foster engaged learning?

Finally, is there a counterpart to students' engaged learning for teachers? What does a process of engaged teaching look and feel like and how does it contribute to instructors' outlooks and satisfaction in higher education?

### Concluding Remarks

I have broken the mold held in my... mind's eye of the more traditional nursing image, and view my responsibility and *voice* in this profession so much differently now; I have been empowered, so to speak, to better understand a far more encompassing... role [that a nurse has] in advocating for and positively empowering others. (Jesse, Week 16 DB)

I am so grateful for the students who participated in this study and shared their perspectives with me so I could learn and, like Jesse, perhaps empower others to engage in teaching and learning together. This study gave voice to participants' views and processes of learning in one policy course. Through listening to and studying what participants had to say, I have greater understanding of the impact, impressions, and connections participants experienced about their learning. Without research into our own

teaching and learning, we cannot know what helped, what hindered, and what changed in students during the unfolding of their learning experiences.

The theory of Engaging in Learning Together is complex and demands much from both students and teachers. While the theory centers on students' learning, it has important implications for faculty. Teaching for engaged learning demands deep knowledge from teachers, not only of topics and concepts of focus but of pedagogies and how and when to use them. It requires bringing one's wholehearted, genuine self in relationship to students and learning situations and using artful, deliberate intentionality to design, construct, and enact learning experiences. This, in turn, has implications for nursing curricula and programs. There must be dialogue about how engaged teaching and learning can be enacted in nursing curricula and programs in ways that promote undergraduate students' learning without putting the burden on faculty alone for implementation. This may require having difficult "political" conversations about resources, policies, and the ultimate aims of education within programs.

When I teach, I see students who have an immense amount of trust in us as teachers to guide their learning and development in our profession. There is a saying "all politics is personal," which I believe holds true as I see students who may not always start out interested or engaged but who become more so as their learning progresses. I see hopefulness and empowerment as they learn political processes and find meaning in their personal and professional lives. Through Engaging in Learning Together, the undergraduate nursing students in this study actively invested in learning political and policy processes through the disciplinary lens of nursing. They not only changed perspectives about politics but in addition changed their understanding of nursing. They

began a personal and professional journey of Becoming Political. It seems fitting to conclude with Leslie's reflection on her learning for the last week of the semester in the NURS 420 course:

The legacy I would like to think I am establishing is being a part of a new generation of nurses who are eager to... contribute towards... health care reform...who can hold their own as a patient advocate... I will continue on from here knowing that I have a voice, and to use it when I see the need. I have taken it upon myself to be sure not to stay silent when I see a need for change.

## REFERENCES

- Abood, S. (2007). Influencing health care in the legislative arena. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 12(1) 15pp. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=c8h&AN=200952663&site=ehost-live>
- Aiken, L.H. (2011). Nurses for the future. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 364(3) 196-198.
- Ashley, J.A. (1976). *Hospitals, paternalism and the role of the nurse*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. (2006). *The essentials of doctoral education for advanced nursing practice*. Washington, D.C.; Author. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/essential-series>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. (2008a). *The essentials of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/essential-series>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. (2008b). *Nursing faculty shortage fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/FactSheets/FacultyShortage.htm>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. (2011). *The essentials of master's education in nursing*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/essential-series>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. (2012). *New AACN data show an enrollment surge in baccalaureate and graduate programs amid calls for more highly educated nurses*. Press Release. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/>

news/articles/2012/enrollment-data

- American Democracy Project (n.d.). *American democracy project: About us*. American Association of Colleges & Universities. Retrieved from <http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/about.htm>.
- American Nurses Association [ANA]. (2001). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/ethics/code/ethicscode150.htm>
- American Nurses Association [ANA]. (2010). *Nursing's social policy statement: The essence of the profession*. Silver Springs, MD: Author.
- American Nurses Association [ANA]. (n.d.). *Short definitions of ethical principles and theories: Familiar words, what do they mean?* Retrieved from <http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/EthicsStandards/Resources/Ethics-Definitions.pdf>
- Atherton, J. S. (2011). *Learning and teaching: Deep and surface learning* [On-line: UK] Retrieved from <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/deepsurf.htm>
- Axelson, R.D. & Flick, A. (2010). Defining student engagement. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 43(1) 38-43. doi 10.1080/00091383.2011.533096
- Bailey, P.A., Rinaldi Carpenter, D. & Harrington, P. (2002). Theoretical foundations of service-learning in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 41(10) 433-436.
- Ballou, K.A. (2000). A historic-philosophical analysis of the professional nurse obligation to participate in sociopolitical activities. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice*, 1(3) 172-184
- Barrett-Sheridan, S. (2009). *A quantitative correlational study of political behavior and attitudes of nurses toward macro-social patient advocacy* (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Accession number 305127506
- Begley, C.M. (1996). Using triangulation in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 24, 122-128.

- Bekemeier, B. & Butterfield, P. (2005). Unreconciled inconsistencies: A critical review of the concept of social justice in 3 national nursing documents. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 28(2) 152-162.
- Benjamin, R. & Ostrow, L. (2008). Technology in nursing education. *International Journal for Human Caring*, 12(2) 57-64.
- Benner, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard, V., & Day, L. (2010). *Educating nurses: A call for radical transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Benton, D. (January 31, 2012). Advocating globally to shape policy and strengthen nursing's influence. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 17(1) manuscript 5.
- Bernard, R.M., Abrami, P.C., Lou, Y., Borokhovski, A, Wade, A., Wozney, L., Wai, P.A., Fiset, M. & Huang, B. (2004, Autumn). How does distance education compare with classroom instruction? A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3) 379-439. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3516028>
- Billings, D.M. (2007). Optimizing distance education in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(6) 247-248.
- Billings, D.M. (2000). A framework for assessing outcomes and practices in web-based courses in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39(2) 60-67.
- Billings, D.M., Connors, H.R. & Skiba, D.J. (2001). Benchmarking best practices in web-based nursing courses. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 23(3) 41-52.
- Billings, D.M., Skiba, D.J. & Connors, H.R. (2005, Mar-Apr). Best practices in web-based courses: Generational differences across undergraduate and graduate nursing students. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 21(2) 126-133.
- Blackmore, S. (2008). Memes and “temes”. Retrieved at TED Talks [http://www.ted.com/talks/susan\\_blackmore\\_on\\_memes\\_and\\_temes.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_blackmore_on_memes_and_temes.html)
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Boland, D.L. (2009). Developing curriculum: Frameworks, outcomes and competencies. In D.M. Billings & J.A. Halstead (Eds.), *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty* (pp. 137-153).
- Boswell, C., Cannon, S. & Miller, J. (2005). Nurses' political involvement: Responsibility versus privilege. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 21(1) 5-8. doi: 0.1016/j.profnurs.2004.11.005
- Bowen, S. (2005, Winter). Engaged learning: Are we all on the same page? *peerReview*, 4-7.
- Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 1 (1), 11-20. Retrieved July 10, 2004 from <http://www.compact.org/>
- Brennan, J. (2008). Higher education and social change. *Higher Education*, 56, 381-393.
- Brown, L.A. (2011). *Baccalaureate nursing student civic engagement study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (UMI Number 3493609).
- Brown, S.T., Kirkpatrick, M.K., Greer, A., Matthias, A.D., & Swanson, M.S. (2009). The use of innovative pedagogies in nursing education: An international perspective. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 30(3) 153-158.
- Browne, A.J. (2001). The influence of liberal political ideology on nursing science. *Nursing Inquiry*, 8(2) 18-129.
- Bruckman, A. (2002). *Ethical guidelines for research online*. Retrieved from <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~asb/ethics/>
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bryson, C. & Hand, L. (2007). The role of engagement in inspiring teaching and learning. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 44(4) 349-362. doi: 10.1080/14703290701602748
- Buerhaus, P.I., Ulrich, B., Donelan, K., & DesRoches, C. (2008, July-August). Registered nurses' perspectives on health care and the 2008 presidential election. *Nursing Economic\$,* 25(4) 227-257.



- Buckley, K.M., Beyna, B. & Dudley-Brown, S. (2005, Jan/Feb). Promoting active learning through on-line discussion boards. *Nurse Educator*, 30(1) 32-36.
- Burrage, J., Shattell, M. & Habermann, B. (2005). The scholarship of engagement in nursing. *Nursing Outlook*, 53, 220-223.
- Burruss, N.M., Billings, D.M., Brownrigg, V., Skiba, D.J. & Connors, H.R. (2009, Jan-Feb). Class size as related to the use of technology, educational practices, and outcomes in web-based nursing courses. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 25(1) 33-41.
- Byrd, M.E., Costello, J., Shelton, C.R., Thomas, P.A. & Petrarca, D. (2004). Active learning experience in health policy for baccalaureate nursing students. *Public Health Nursing*, 21(5) 501-506.
- Campus Compact (2002). *Introduction: Creating a framework for the engaged campus*. Retrieved from <http://www.compact.org/>
- Campus Compact (2009). *2008 service statistics: Highlights and trends of Campus Compact's annual membership survey*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact. Retrieved from <http://www.compact.org/about/statistics>
- Callahan, S. (2000). Incorporating a political action framework into a BSN program. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39 (1)34-36.
- Carini, R.M., Kuh, G.D., & Klein, S.P. (2006). Student engagement and student learning: Testing the linkages. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(1) 1-32.
- Carnegie, E. & Kiger, A. (2009). Being and doing politics: An outdated model or 21<sup>st</sup> century reality? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(9) 1976-1984.
- Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE] (2008). *Young voters in the 2008 presidential election*. Fact Sheet. Tufts University & Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. Retrieved from [http://www.lcivicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_08\\_exit\\_polls.pdf](http://www.lcivicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_08_exit_polls.pdf)

- Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE] (2010). *Civic skills and federal policy*. Fact Sheet. Tufts University & Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. Retrieved from <http://www.civicyouth.org>
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 249-291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Charmaz, K. (2004). Premises, principles, and practices in qualitative research: Revisiting the foundations. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 976-993. doi: 10.1177/1049732304266795
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded theory as an emergent method. In S.Nagy Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 155-172). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Chickering, A.W. & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7) 3-7.
- Chickering, A.W. & Gamson, Z.F. (1991). *Applying the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Childs, J.C., Sepples, S.B. & Moody, K.A. (2003). Mentoring youth: a service-learning course within a college of nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 42(4)182-185.
- Christianson, L., Tiene, D. & Luft, P. (2002). Examining online instruction in undergraduate nursing education. *Distance Education*, 23(2) 213-229.
- Clark, C.M. (2008a). Student voices on faculty incivility in nursing education: A conceptual model. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 29(5) 284-289.
- Clark, C.M. (2008b). Faculty and student assessment of and experience with incivility in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 47(10) 458-465.

- Clark, C.M. (2009). Faculty field guide for promoting student civility in the classroom. *Nurse Educator, 34*(5) 194-197.
- Clark, M.J. (1984). *Community nursing: Health care for today and tomorrow*. Reston, VA: Reston Publishing.
- Cobb, S.C. (2011, Mar/Apr). Social presence, satisfaction, and perceived learning of RN-to-BSN students in web-based nursing courses. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 32*(2) 115-19.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2005). Teacher educators as researchers: Multiple perspectives. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 219-225.
- Cohen, S.S., Mason, D.J., Kovner, C., Leavitt, J.K., Pulcini, J. & Sochalski, J. (1996). Stages of nursing's political development: Where we've been and where we ought to go. *Nursing Outlook, 44*(6) 259-266.
- Colby, A. (2006). *Educating for democracy*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Retrieved from <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perspectives/>
- Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E., & Stephens, J. (2003). *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Colby, A., Beaumont, E., Ehrlich, T. & Corngold, J. (2007). *Educating for democracy: Preparing undergraduates for responsible political engagement*. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Jossey-Bass.
- Coyne, I. & Cowley, S. (2006). Using grounded theory to research parent participation. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 11*(6) 501-515.
- Cramer, M.E. (2002). Factors influencing organized political participation in nursing. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice, 3*(2) 97-107.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Dalton, R.J. (2006). *Citizenship norms and political participation in America: The good news is...the bad news is wrong*. CDACS Occasional Paper 2006-01, October, The Center for Democracy and Civil Society, Georgetown University. Retrieved from <http://www8.georgetown.edu/centers/cdacs>
- Davies, C. (2004). Political leadership and the politics of nursing. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 12, 235-241.
- Denson, N., Vogelgesang, L.J. & Saenz, V. (2005). *Can service-learning and a college climate of service lead to increased political engagement after college?* Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from [http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/understanding\\_service\\_learning.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/understanding_service_learning.html)
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2003). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 1-35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Des Jardin, K.E. (2001). Political involvement in nursing—education and empowerment. *AORN Journal*, 74(4) 468-475.
- Dewey, J. (1916/2002). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Retrieved from University of Virginia American Studies Program 2002-2003 website: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hypertext.html>
- Diekelmann, N. L. (2002). “Too much content...:” Epistemologies’ Grasp and Nursing Education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 41(11) 469-470.
- Diekelmann, N.L. (2003). *Teaching the practitioners of care: New pedagogies for the health professions*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Diekelmann, N., Ironside, P. & Harlow, M. (2003). Introduction. In N. Diekelmann (Ed.) *Teaching the practitioners of care: New pedagogies for the health professions* (pp. 3-21). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

- Dillard, N. & Siktberg, L. (2009). Curriculum development: An overview. In D.M. Billings & J.A. Halstead (Eds.) *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed* (pp. 75-91). St. Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier.
- Dingel-Stewart, S. & LaCoste, J. (2004). Light at the end of the tunnel: A vision for an empowered nursing profession across the continuum of care. *Nursing Administration Quarterly, 28*(3) 212-216.
- Dollinger, M.I. (2007). *A grounded theory study of nurse advocacy in health policy* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from CINAHL with Full Text. Accession Number: 2009711353
- Ehrlich, T. (1998). Reinventing John Dewey's "Pedagogy as a University Discipline", *The Elementary School Journal, 98*(5) 489-509.
- Ehrlich, T. (2000a). Preface. In T. Erlich (Ed.), *Civic responsibility and higher education* (pp. v-xix). Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Ehrlich, T. (2000b). Civic engagement. *Measuring up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://measuringup.highereducation.org/2000/articles/ThomasEhrlich.cfm>
- Ess, C. & AoIR Researchers. (2002). *Ethical decision-making and internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee*. Retrieved from <http://www.aior.org/reprts/ethics.pdf>
- Falk Rafael, A. (2005). Speaking truth to power: Nursing's legacy and moral imperative. *Advances in Nursing Science, 28*(3) 3-17.
- Faulk, D.R. & Ternus, M.P. (2004). Strategies for teaching public policy in nursing. *Nurse Educator, 29*(3) 99-102.
- Fawcett, J. & Russell, G. (2001). A conceptual model of nursing and health policy. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice, 2*(1)108-116.
- Finegold, A. R. & Cooke, L. (2006). Exploring the attitudes, experiences and dynamics of interaction in online groups. *The Internet and Higher Education, 9*, 201-215. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2006.06.003

- Fothergill, A., Palumbo, M.V., Rambur, B., Reinier, K., McIntosh, B. (2005). The volunteer potential of inactive nurses for disaster preparedness. *Public Health Nursing, 22*(5) 414-421.
- Fritschler, A.L. & Smith, B.L.R. (2009, February 13). The new climate of timidity on campuses. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved at <http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5>
- Galston, W.A. (2004a, April). Civic education and political participation. *PSOnline*, 1-4. Retrieved from <http://www.apsanet.org>
- Galston, W. A. (2004b, Winter). Civic education and political participation. *Forum*, 36-40.
- Galston, W.A. (2007). Civic knowledge, civic education, and civic engagement: A summary of recent research. *International Journal of Public Administration, 30*, 623-642. doi: 10.1080/01900690701215888
- Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T. & Archer, W. (2001). Critical thinking, cognitive presence, and computer conferencing in distance education. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 15*(1) 7-23.
- Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T. & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3) 87-105.
- Garrison, D.R. & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education, 95*-105. doi 10.1016/j.iheduc.2004.02.001
- Gebbie, K.M., Wakefield, M. & Kerfoot, K. (2000). Nursing and health policy. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 32*(3) 307-315.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gehrke, P. M. (2008). Civic engagement and nursing education. *Advances in Nursing Science, 31*(1) 52-66.

- Gibbs, G., Lucas, L. & Spouse, J. (1997). The effects of class size and form of assessment on nursing students' performance approaches to study and course expectations. *Nurse Education Today*, 17, 311-318.
- Gibson, C.M. (2006). *Research universities and engaged scholarship: A leadership agenda for renewing the civic mission of higher education*. Campus Compact 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Education Citizens, Building Communities. Retrieved from [http://www.compact.org/20th/read/new\\_times\\_demand\\_new\\_scholarship](http://www.compact.org/20th/read/new_times_demand_new_scholarship)
- Giroux, H. A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture, and schooling*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Giroux, H., Taylor, J.R., & Cooren, F. (1998). *Memes and the persistence of organizational structures*. Retrieved from <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/Conf/MemePap/Giroux.html>
- Glaser, B.G. (1967). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. In G.J. McCall & J.L. Simmons (Eds.) *Issues in participant observation* (pp. 216-227). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Goodlad, J.I., Soder, R. & McDaniel, B. (2008). *Education and the making of a democratic people*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Gottlieb, K. & Robinson, G. (2006). *A practical guide for integrating civic responsibility into the curriculum*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (pp. 21-49). Retrieved from [http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Documents/cr\\_guide\\_2nd.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Documents/cr_guide_2nd.pdf)
- Gottschalk, K.K. & Hjortshoj, K. (2004). *The elements of teaching writing: A resource for instructors in all disciplines*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

- Gumport, P.J. (2000). Academic restructuring: Organizational change and institutional imperatives. *Higher Education*, 39, 67-91.
- Gurin, P., Dey, E.L., Hurtado, S. & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(3) 330-365.
- Halstead, J.A. & Billings, D.M. (2009). Teaching and learning in online learning communities. In D.M. Billings & J.A. Halstead (Eds.) *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St. Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier.
- Harasim, L. (2000). Shift happens: Online education as a new paradigm in learning. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 3, 41-61.
- Harrington, C., Crider, M.C., Benner, P.E. & Malone, R.E. (2005). Advanced nursing training in health policy: Designing and implementing a new program. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 6(2) 99-108. doi: 10.1177/1527154405276070
- Health Resources & Services Administration [HRSA] (2010, March). *The registered nurse population: Initial findings from the 2008 national samples survey of registered nurses*. US Department of Health & Human Services. Retrieved from <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/rnsurvey/initialfindings2008.pdf>
- Henderson, J.G. & Kesson, K.R. (2004). *Curriculum wisdom: Educational decisions in democratic societies* (pp. 1-66). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Hermann, M. L. (2004). Linking liberal and professional learning in nursing education. *Liberal Education*, Fall, 42-47.
- Heylighen, F. (2001). *Memetics*. Retrieved from <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/memes.html>
- Higher Education Research Institute [HERI]. (2005). *The American freshman: National norms for fall 2005*. Retrieved from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri>
- Hobson, E.H. (2004). *Getting students to read: Fourteen tips*. The IDEA Center, IDEA Paper # 40. Retrieved at <http://www.theideacenter.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers>



- Holland, B. A. (2005). *Scholarship and mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century university: The role of engagement*. Retrieved from <http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2005/program/papers/holland.pdf>
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Idaho Department of Labor. (2011). *Idaho nursing overview*. Retrieved at [http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/idaho\\_nursing\\_overview.pdf](http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/idaho_nursing_overview.pdf)
- Im, E. & Chee, W. (2004). Institutional review board issues in internet-based research. In J.J. Fitzpatrick and K.S. Montgomery (Eds.) *Internet for nursing research: A guide to strategies, skills, and resources* (pp. 104-119). New York: Springer Publishing Co., Inc.
- Innes, R.B. (2004). *Reconstructing undergraduate education: Using learning science to design effective courses*, (pp.1-31). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Institute of Medicine of the National Academies [IOM]. (2010). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and National Academy of Sciences, Oct. 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>
- Institute of Medicine of the National Academies [IOM]. (2011). *The future of nursing: Focus on education*. Report at a Glance. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health/Report-Brief-Education.aspx?page=1>
- Ironside, P.M. & Valiga, T.M. (2006). A report on the national survey on excellence in nursing education. National League for Nursing, *Shaping the Future*, 10, Spring 2006.
- Jacoby, B. (2009). *Civic engagement in higher education: Concepts and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Jacoby, B. & Hollander, E. (2009). Securing the future of civic engagement in higher education. In B. Jacoby (Ed.) *Civic engagement in higher education: Concepts and practices* (227-248). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Jarvis, S.E., Montoya, L. & Mulvoy, E. (2005). *The political participation of college students, working students and working youth*. CIRCLE working paper 37. Retrieved at [http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/working\\_papers.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/working_papers.htm)
- Jenkins, K. (2005). *Gender and civic engagement: Secondary analysis of survey data*. CIRCLE Working Paper, 41. Retrieved from <http://www.civicyouth.org/circle-working-paper-41-gender-and-civic-engagement-secondary-analysis-of-survey-data/>
- Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, F.P. (2003). *Joining together: Group theory and group skills*, (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Junn, J. (2004). Diversity, immigration, and the politics of civic education. *PSOnline*, 1-3. Retrieved from <http://www.apsanet.org>
- Kahu, E.R. (2011). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-16, iFirst Article. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.598505
- Keeter, S., Zukin, C., Andolina, M., & Jenkins, K. (2002). *The civic and political health of the nation: A generational portrait*. Retrieved from [http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth\\_index.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index.htm)
- Keeter, S., Horowitz, J. & Tyson, A. (2008). *Young voters in the 2008 election*. Pew Research Center Publications. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1031/young-voters-in-the-2008-election>
- Kelly, H.F., Ponton, M.K. & Rovai, A.P. (2007). A comparison of student evaluations of teaching between online and face-to-face courses. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10, 89-101. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2007.02.001
- Kerr, M.S., Rynearson, K. & Kerr, M.C. (2006). Student characteristics for online learning success. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 9, 91-105.

- Kiesa, A., Orłowski, A.P., Levine, P., Both, D., Kirby, E.H., Lopez, M.H. & Marcelo, K.B. (2007). *Millennials talk politics: A study of college student political engagement*. CIRCLE. Retrieved from [http://www.civicyouth.org/?page\\_id=212](http://www.civicyouth.org/?page_id=212)
- Koeckeritz, J., Malkiewicz, J. & Henderson, A. (2002). The seven principles of good practice: Application for online education in nursing. *Nurse Educator*, 27(6) 283-287.
- Kuh, G.D. (2001, May/June). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change*, 10-17, 66.
- Kuh, G.D. (2003 March/April). What we're learning about student engagement from NSSE. *Change*, 24-32.
- Larreamendy-Joerns, J. & Leinhardt, G. (2006). Going the distance with online education. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4) 567-605.
- Lawry, S. (2009). Prologue: New currents in the civic engagement movement: An update of key developments since 2006. In S. Lawry, D. Laurison & J. VanAntwerpen (authors), *Liberal education and civic engagement*. Ford Foundation Knowledge, Creativity & Freedom Program. Retrieved from [http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/liberal\\_education\\_and\\_civic\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/liberal_education_and_civic_engagement.pdf)
- Lawry, S., Laurison, D. & VanAntwerpen, J. (2006). *Liberal education and civic engagement*. Ford Foundation, Knowledge, Creativity & Freedom Program. Retrieved from [http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/impact/liberal\\_education\\_and\\_civic\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/impact/liberal_education_and_civic_engagement.pdf)
- Lei, S.A., Bartlett, K.A., Gorney, S.E. & Herschbach, T.R. (2010, June). Resistance to reading compliance among college students: Instructors' perspectives. *College Student Journal*, 44, (2) 219-229.
- Levine, P. (2008, Summer). Educate early, vote often. *Forum*, 18-21.

- Lewenson, S.B. (2012). A historical perspective on policy, politics and nursing. In D.J. Mason, J.K. Leavitt, & M.W. Chaffee (Eds.). *Policy and politics in nursing and health care*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed, (pp. 12-18). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders.
- Liazos, A. & Liss, J.R. (2009, August). *Strategies for incorporating education for civic and social responsibility in the undergraduate curriculum*. Project Pericles White Paper. Retrieved from <http://www.projectpericles.org/?q=cecpage>
- Lichtman, M. (2011). *Understanding & evaluating qualitative educational research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Lindeman, C.A. (2000). The future of nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39(1) 5-12.
- Lingenfelter, P.E. (2004). The state and higher education: An essential partnership. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 127, 47-59.
- Lombardi, M.M. (2007). *Authentic learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: An overview*. Educause Learning Initiative: Advancing Education through IT Innovation, ELI Paper: 1. Retrieved from <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI3009.pdf>
- Lopez, M.H. & Elrod, B.A. (2006). *Civic engagement among recent college graduates*. CIRCLE Fact Sheet, The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. Retrieved from [http://www.civicyouth.org/?page\\_id=154#11](http://www.civicyouth.org/?page_id=154#11)
- Lopez, M.H. & Kiesa, A. (2009). What we know about civic engagement among college students. In B. Jacoby (Ed.) *Civic engagement in higher education: Concepts and practices* (pp. 31-48). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lopez, M.H. & Taylor, P. (2009). *Dissecting the 2008 electorate: Most diverse in US history*. Pew Research Center, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/dissecting-2008-electorate.pdf>
- Luckerhoff, J. & Guillemette, F. (2011). The conflicts between grounded theory requirements and institutional requirements for scientific research. *The Qualitative Report*, 16 (2) 396-414.

- Magnussen, L., Itano, J. & McGuckin, N. (2005). Legislative advocacy skills for baccalaureate nursing students. *Nurse Educator*, 30(3) 109-112.
- Marcelo, K.B. (2007). *College experience and volunteering*. CIRCLE Fact Sheet. Retrieved from [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS07\\_College\\_Volunteering.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS07_College_Volunteering.pdf)
- Mancuso, J.M. (2009). Perceptions of distance education among nursing faculty members in North America. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 11, 194-205. doi: 10.1111/j.1442-2018.2009.00456.x
- Mancuso-Murphy, J. (2007). Distance education in nursing: An integrated review of online nursing students' experiences with technology-delivered instruction. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(6) 252-260.
- Mann, C. & Stewart, F. (2000). *Internet communication and qualitative research: A handbook for researching online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Manning, M. & Grosso, D. (2011). Doctor of nursing practice students advocating for health care access, quality, and reform: From the virtual classroom to Capitol Hill. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 50(1) 14-20.
- Martin, S.D. (2012). Finding the fit: Reconciling professional roles of researcher and teacher In J. R. Young, L. B. Erickson, & S. Pinnegar (Eds.), *Extending inquiry communities: Illuminating teacher education through self-study* (pp. 204-207). Provo, UT: Brigham Young University.
- Maryland, M. A. & Gonzalez, R.I. (2012). Patient advocacy in the community and legislative arena. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 17(1) manuscript 2.
- Mason, D.J., Costello-Nikitas, D.M., Scanlan, J.M., & Magnuson, B.A. (1991, Jan/Feb). Empowering nurses for politically astute change in the workplace. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 22(1) 5-10.
- Mason, D.J., Leavitt, J.K. & Chaffee, M.W. (2007). *Policy and politics in nursing and health care* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). St. Louis, MO: Saunders.

- Mason, D.J., Leavitt, J.K. & Chaffee, M.W. (2012). *Policy and politics in nursing and health care* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). St. Louis, MO: Saunders.
- Mathews, D. (2000). How concepts of politics control concepts of civic responsibility. In T. Ehrlich (Ed.), *Civic responsibility and higher education* (pp. 149-163). Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Matthews, J.H. (2012, January). Role of professional organizations in advocating for the nursing professions. *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 17(1) Manuscript 3.
- McCann, T.V. & Clark, E. (2003a). Grounded theory in nursing research: Part 1—methodology. *Nurse Researcher*, 11(2) 7-18.
- McCann, T.V. & Clark, E. (2003b). Grounded theory in nursing research: Part 2—critique. *Nurse Researcher*, 11(2) 19-28.
- McDowell, B. (2002). Volunteering—a community partnership. *JSPN*, 7(3) 121-122.
- McGonigal, K. (2005). Teaching for transformation: From learning theory to teaching strategies. *Speaking of Teaching Newsletter*, 14(2). Retrieved from The Center for Teaching and Learning, Stanford University website <http://wwwctl.stanford.edu/newsletter/transformation.pdf>
- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M. & Jones, K. (2009). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. US Dept. of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Center for Technology in Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED505824.pdf>
- Meier, D. (1995). *The power of their ideas: Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M.R. Welton (Ed.). *In defense of the lifeworld: Critical perspectives on adult learning* (pp.39-70).
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5-12.

- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Milio, N. (2002). Building capacity for policy action: Educating today's and tomorrow's nurses. *Journal of Nursing Law*, 8(3)7-18, 20-21.
- Mill, C. (2006). Volunteering in Cambodia. *Canadian Nurse*, 102(6) 29-31.
- Millis, B. (2010). *Promoting deep learning*. The IDEA Center, IDEA Paper # 47.  
Retrieved at <http://www.theideacenter.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers>
- Mills, J., Bonner, A. & Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1) 25-35.
- Milstead, J. (2007). *Health policy and politics: A nurse's guide, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Misa, K., Anderson, J. & Yamamura, E. (2005). *The lasting impact of college on young adults' civic and political engagement*. Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), University of California, Los Angeles. Presented at 2005 Association for the Study of Higher Education Annual Conference. Retrieved from [http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/understanding\\_service\\_learning.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/understanding_service_learning.html)
- Mueller, C. & Billings, D.M. (2009). Service learning: Developing values and social responsibility. In D.M. Billings and J.A. Halstead (Eds.). *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* (pp. 173-185). St. Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier.
- Munhall, P. L. (2007). *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Murphy, N., Canales, M.K., Norton, S.A. & DeFilippis, J. (2005). Striving for congruence: The interconnection between values, practice and political action. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 6(1) 20-29.
- Musil, C.M. (2009). Educating students for personal and social responsibility: The Civic Learning Spiral. In B. Jacoby & Associates, (Eds.). *Civic engagement and higher education: Concepts and practices* (pp 49-68). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Musil, C. M. (2003, Spring) Educating for citizenship. *peerReview*, 4-8.

- Narsavage, G.L., Lindell, D., Chen, Y., Savrin, C., Duffy, E. (2002). A community engagement initiative: Service-learning in graduate nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 41(10) 457-461.
- National Conference on Citizenship [NCC]. (2006). *America's civic health index: Broken engagement*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncoc.net>
- National Conference on Citizenship [NCC]. (2009). *America's civic health index: Civic health in hard times*. Retrieved from [http://www.civicyouth.org/?page\\_id=212](http://www.civicyouth.org/?page_id=212)
- National League for Nursing [NLN] (2003). *Position statement: Innovation in nursing education: A call to reform*. Retrieved from <http://www.nln.org/aboutnln/PositionStatements/innovation.htm>
- National League for Nursing [NLN] (2005). *Position statement: Transforming Nursing Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.nln.org/aboutnln/PositionStatements/index.htm>
- National League for Nursing [NLN] Nursing Education Advisory Council [NEAC] (2006). Headlines from the NLN. A first step toward reform: Results of the faculty survey on innovation. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 27(1) 56-57.
- National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] (2003). *Annual Report. Converting data into action: Expanding the boundaries of institutional improvement*. Retrieved from Indiana University website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/html/nsse-2003.shtml>
- National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] (2009). *Assessment for improvement: Tracking student engagement over time—Annual results 2009*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Nokes, K.M., Nickitas, D.M., Keida, R. & Neville, S. (2005). Does service-learning increase cultural competency, critical thinking, and civic engagement? *Journal of Nursing Education*, 44(2) 65-70.
- Olsan, T.H., Forbes, R.A., MacWilliams, G., Norwood, W.S., Reifsteck, M.A., Trosin, B. & Weber, M.M. (2003, Sept. 1). Strengthening nurses' political identity through



- service learning partnerships in education. *Journal of the New York State Nurses Association*, 34(2). Item number: 2004072127
- O'Brien-Larivée, C. (2011). A service-learning experience to teach baccalaureate nursing students about health policy. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 50(6) 332-336.
- O'Neil, E. (2009). Four factors that guarantee health care change. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 25(6) 317-321.
- Otterness, N., Gehrke, P.M. & Sener, I. (2007). Benefits and challenges of partnerships with faith communities in nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(1) 39-44.
- Overbaugh, R.C. & Nickel, C.E. (2011). A comparison of student satisfaction and value of academic community between blended and online sections of a university-level educational foundations course. *Internet and Higher Education*, 14, 164-174.
- Pace, A.C. & Flowers, S.K. (2012). Students' perception of professional advocacy following a political advocacy course. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 4, 34-38. doi: 10.1016/j.cptl.2011.10.005
- Pascarella, E. (2001). Identifying excellence in undergraduate education: Are we even close? *Change*, May/June, 19-23.
- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), Pub. L. No. 111-148, §2702, 124 Stat.119, 318-319 (2010).
- Persell, C.H. & Wenglinsky, H. (2004). For-profit post-secondary education and civic engagement. *Higher Education*, 47, 337-359.
- Pew Research Center (2008). *Young voters in the 2008 election*. Pew Research Center Publications. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1031/young-voters-in-the-2008-election>
- Popkess, A.M. & McDaniel, A. (2011, March/April). Are nursing students engaged in learning? A secondary analysis of data. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 12(2) 89-94.

- Portney, K.E., Eichenberg, R.C. & Niemi, R.G. (2009). *Gender differences in political and civic engagement among young people*. Prepared for presentation at American Political Science Association, Toronto, Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.ase.tufts.edu/polsci/faculty/eichenberg/NiemiPortneyEichenbergAug26.pdf>
- Powell, J.D. & Lines, J.I. (2010, May-June). Make learning personal: Recommendations for classroom practice. *About Campus*, 19-25. doi: 10.1002/abc.20018
- Presidents' 4<sup>th</sup> of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (1999, July). *Presidents' Leadership Colloquim by Campus Compact and the American Council on Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.compact.org>
- Putnam, R.D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6.1, 65-78.
- Primomo, J. (2007). Changes in Political astuteness after a health systems and policy course. *Nurse Educator*, 32(6) 260-264.
- Rains, J.W. & Carroll, K.L. (2000). The effect of healthy policy education on self-perceived political competence of graduate students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39(1) 37-40.
- Rains Warner, J. (2003). A phenomenological approach to political competence: Stories of nurse activists. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 4(2), 135-143.
- Rains Warner, J. & Barton-Kriese, P. (2001). Developing political competence: A comparative study across disciplines. *Public Health Nursing*, 18(4), 219-224.
- Rains Warner, J. & Misener, T.R. (2009). Forces and issues influencing curriculum development. In D.M. Billings & J.A. Halstead (Eds.), *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (pp. 92-104). St. Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier.
- Ramaley, J.A. (2009). Community-engaged scholarship in higher education: An expanding experience. *Metropolitan Universities: An International Forum*, 20(2) 139-153.

- Redman, R.W. & Clark, L. (2002). Service-learning as a model for integrating social justice in the nursing curriculum. *Journal of Nursing Education, 41*(10)446-449.
- Reimer Kirkham, S., Van Hofwegen, L, & Hoe Harwood, C. (2005). Narratives of social justice: Learning in clinical settings. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship, 2*(1) 1-12 (article 28).
- Reutter, L. & Duncan, S. (2002). Preparing nurses to promote health-enhancing public policies. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice, 3*(4) 294-305. doi: 10.1177/152715402237441
- Reutter, L. & Eastlick Kushner, K. (2010). 'Health equity through action on the social determinants of health': Taking up the challenge. *Nursing Inquiry, 17*(3) 269-280.
- Reutter, L. & Williamson, D.L. (2000). Advocating health public policy: Implications for baccalaureate nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education, 39*(1) 21-26.
- Rhoades, G. & Slaughter, S. (2004). Academic capitalism in the new economy: Challenges and choices. *American Academic, 1*(1) 37-59.
- Ridenour, N. & Trautman, D. (2009). A primer for nurses on advancing health reform policy. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 25*(6) 358-362.
- Riley, J. & Beal, J.A. (May/June 2010). Public service: Experienced nurses' views on social and civic responsibility. *Nursing Outlook, 58*, 142-147. doi: 1016/j.outlook.2010.02.158
- Rivera-Goba, M.V. & Nieto, S. (2007). Mentoring Latina nurses: A multicultural perspective. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 6*(1), 35-53.
- Roberts, J.I. & Group, T.M. (1995). *Feminism and nursing: An historical perspective on power, status, and political activism in the nursing profession* (pp. 295-335). Westport, Conn.: Praeger Pub.
- Rovai, A.P. (2004). A constructivist approach to online college learning. *The Internet and Higher Education, 7*, 79-93. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2003.10.002
- Rovai, A.P. (2007). Facilitating online discussions effectively. *The Internet and Higher Education, 10*, 77-88.

- Rovai, A. P., Ponton, M.K., Derrick, M.G. & Davis, J.M. (2006). Student evaluation of teaching in the virtual and traditional classrooms: A comparative analysis. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 9, 23-35.
- Rovai, A. P. & Wighting, M.J. (2005). Feelings of alienation and community among higher education students in a virtual classroom. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 8, 97-110.
- Rovai, A.P., Wighting, M.J. & Lucking, R. (2004). The classroom and school community inventory: Development, refinement, and validation of a self-report measure for educational research. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7, 263-280.
- Russell, G.E. & Fawcett, J. (2005). The conceptual model for nursing and health policy revisited. *Policy & Politics in Nursing Practice*, 6(4) 319-326.
- Saltmarsh, J. & Zlotkowski, E. (2011). *Higher education and democracy: Essays on service-learning and civic engagement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Selanders, L.C. & Crane, P.C. (2012). The voice of Florence Nightingale on advocacy. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 17(1) manuscript 1.
- Schaefer, K.M. & Zygmunt, D. (2003, Sept/Oct). Analyzing the teaching style of nursing faculty: Does it promote a student-centered or teacher-centered learning environment? *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 24,(5) 238-245.
- Schell, K.A. (2006). A delphi study of innovative teaching in baccalaureate nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 45(11) 439-448.
- Schlechty, P.C. (2002). *Working on the Work: An Action Plan for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schneider, C.G. (2000). Educational missions and civic responsibility: Toward the engaged academy. In Ehrlich, T. (Ed.) *Civic responsibility and higher education* (pp. 98-123). Phoenix: American Council on Education, Oryx Press.
- Schreiner, L.A. (2010a, May-June). The thriving quotient. *About Campus*, 2-10. doi: 10.1002/abc.20016

- Schreiner, L.A. (2010b, July-August). Thriving in the classroom. *About Campus*, 2-10. doi: 10.1002/abc.20022
- Schreiner, L.A. (2010c, September-October). Thriving in community. *About Campus*, 2-10. doi: 10.1002/abc.20029
- Scott, K. W. (2004). Relating categories in grounded theory analysis: Using a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix. *The Qualitative Report*, 9(1) 113-126.
- Shea, P. & Bidjerano, T. (2009). Community of inquiry as a theoretical framework to foster “epistemic engagement” and “cognitive presence” in online education. *Computers & Education*, 52, 542-553. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2008.10.007
- Shea, P., Li, C.S. & Pickett, A. (2006). A study of teaching presence and student sense of learning community in fully online and web-enhanced college courses. *Internet and Higher Education*, 9, 175-190.
- Shulman, L. (2002, Nov/Dec). Making differences: A table of learning. *Change*, 34(6) 36-44.
- Shulman, L. & Fenstermacher, G. (2008). Foreword. In W.M. Sullivan & M. S. Rosin (Eds.) *A new agenda for higher education: Shaping a life of the mind for practice* (pp. vii-xiii). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Seifer, S.D. & Connors, K. (2001). *Partners in caring: A team approach to service-learning in nursing education*. Retrieved from <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pcc.html>
- Sitzman, K. & Leners, D.W. (2006, Sept./Oct.). Student perceptions of caring in online baccalaureate education. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 27(5) 254-259.
- Smith, G.R. (2007). Health disparities: What can nursing do? *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice*, 8(4) 285-291.
- Smith, B.L.R. & Fritschler, A.L. (2009, Fall). Engagement in civic education remains weak. *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, 8-10.

- Smith, K.A., Sheppard, S.D., Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. (2005). Pedagogies of engagement: Classroom-based practices. *Journal of Engineering Education*, January, 1-15. Retrieved from [http://www.ce.umn.edu/smith/docs/smith-Pedagogies\\_of\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.ce.umn.edu/smith/docs/smith-Pedagogies_of_Engagement.pdf)
- Snow, D.A. (2001). Extending and broadening Blumer's conceptualization of symbolic interactionism. *Symbolic Interaction*, 24(3) 367-377.
- Solomon Cohen, S. & Milone-Nuzzo, P. (2001). Advancing health policy in nursing education through service learning. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 23(3), March, 28-40. Retrieved from <http://gateway.ut.ovid.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/gwl/ovidweb.cgi>
- Spenceley, S.M., Reutter, L. & Allen, M.N. (2006). The road less traveled: Nursing advocacy at the policy level. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 7(3) 180-194.
- Sorensen, J. (2005, April). Role as camp nurse adds new dimension to nursing practice. *Nursing BC*, pp.19-20.
- Spiezio, K.E. (2002). Pedagogy and political (dis)engagement. *Liberal Education*, 88(4) 14.
- Spiezio, K. E. (2009). Engaging general education. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Eds.) *Civic engagement in higher education* (pp. 85-98). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Spiezio, K.E., Baker, K.Q. & Boland, K. (2005). General education and civic engagement: An empirical analysis of pedagogical possibilities. *The Journal of General Education*, 54(4) 273-292
- Starks, H. & Brown Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10) 1372-1380. doi: 10.1177/1049732307307031
- Stokes, L.G. & Flowers, N. (2009). Multicultural education in nursing. In D.M. Billings and J.A. Halstead (Eds.), *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (pp. 268-282).

- Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sullivan, W.M. (2000). Institutional identity and social responsibility in higher education. In T. Erlich (Ed.), *Civic responsibility and higher education* (pp. 19-36). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Sullivan, E.J. (2004). *Becoming influential: A guide for nurses*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Sullivan, W.M. & Rosin, M.S. (2008). *A new agenda for higher education: Shaping a life of the mind for practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Swaner, L.E. (2005). Educating for personal and social responsibility: A review of the literature. *Liberal Education*, 91(3/4) 8 pgs. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=930149211&sid=1&Fmt=4&clientid=8813&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Tanner, C.A. (1998). Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century—or is it the 21-year curriculum? *Journal of Nursing Education*, 37(9) 383-384.
- Tanner, C.A. (2004). The meaning of curriculum: Content to be covered or stories to be heard? *Journal of Nursing Education*, 43(1) 3-4.
- Tanner, C.A. (2010). Transforming pre-licensure nursing education: Preparing the new nurse to meet emerging health care needs. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31(6) 349-353.
- Taylor, G. (1995). Politics and nursing: An elective experience. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 21, 1180-1185.
- Thiele, J. E. (2003). Learning patterns of online students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 42(8) 364-365.
- Torres, S. & Castillo, H. (2006). Bridging cultures: Hispanics/Latinos and nursing. In P.S. Cowen & S. Moorhead (Eds.) *Current issues in nursing*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (pp. 586-592). St. Louis: Mosby Elsevier.

- Trnobranski, P.H. (1997). Power and vested interests—tacit influences on the construction of nursing curricula? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25, 1084-1088.
- Tufts University & Campus Compact (2006). *New times demand new scholarship: Research universities and civic engagement, a leadership agenda*. Retrieved from [http://www.compact.org/resources/civic\\_engagement](http://www.compact.org/resources/civic_engagement)
- Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward Utopia: A century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tyler, R. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Vaughan, N.D. (2010). A blended community of inquiry approach: Linking student engagement and course redesign. *Internet and Higher Education*, 13, (1-2)60-65. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2009.10.007
- Vogelgesang, L.J. (2009). What do we know? Issues around theory and approach. In E. Hollander and C. Burack (Eds.) *How young people develop long-lasting habits of civic engagement: A conversation on building a research agenda*. Spencer Foundation, June 24-26, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/spencerconversationresearchagenda1.pdf>
- Vogelgesang, L.J. & Astin, A.W. (2005). *Research report: Post-college civic engagement among graduates*. Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from [www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri)
- Washer, P. (2001). Barriers to the use of web-based learning in nursing education. *Nurse Education Today*, 21, 455-460.
- Welch, M. (2009). Moving from service-learning to civic engagement. In B. Jacoby & Associates, *Civic engagement in higher education: Concepts and practices* (pp. 174-195). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wellman, D.S. (2009). The diverse learning needs of students. In D.M. Billings & J.A. Halstead (Eds.), *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (pp. 18-32). St. Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier.



- Westheimer, J. & Kahne J. (2004a). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2) 237-269.
- Westheimer, J. & Kahne, J. (2004b). Educating the “good” citizen: Political choices and pedagogical goals. *PSOnline*, April, 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.apsanet.org>
- Wilson, H.S. & Hutchinson, S.A. (1996). Methodologic mistakes in grounded theory. *Nursing Research*, 45(2) 122-124
- Wilson, L.B., Lester, L. & Simson, S.P. (2000). Assessing the involvement of retired health professionals in meeting the needs of underserved populations. *Nursing Outlook*, 48(1) 34-39.
- Wood, A.T. (2008). What is renewal? Why now? In J.I. Goodlad, R. Soder & B. McDaniel (Eds.) *Education and the making of a democratic people*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- World Health Organization [WHO]. (1946). *Frequently asked questions: What is the WHO definition of health?* Originally cited in Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 1946. Retrieved at <http://www.who.int/suggestions/faq/en/index.html>
- World Health Organization [WHO]. (October 2011). *Rio political declaration on social determinants of health*. World Conference on Social Determinants of Health. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/sdhconference/declaration/en/>
- Wright, M. C. (2007). Making sense of data: How public health graduate students build theory through qualitative research techniques. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(1) 94-101.
- Wuest, J. (2007). Grounded theory: The method. In P. L. Munhall (Ed.) *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp 239-271). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Young, A. & Norgard, C. (2006). Assessing the quality of online courses from the students’ perspective. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 9, 107-115.

- Zeichner, K. (2005). Becoming a teacher educator: A personal perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 117-124.
- Zeichner K.M. & Conklin, H.G. (2005). Teacher education programs. In M.Cochran-Smith & K.M. Zeichner (Eds.). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Zlotkowski, E. (2000). Civic engagement and the academic disciplines. In T. Erlich (Ed.), *Civic responsibility and higher education* (pp.309-322). Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Zlotkowski, E. & Williams, D. (2003). The faculty role in civic engagement. *peerReview*, Spring, 9-11.

APPENDIX A

**Nurs 420 Policy, Power and Voice**

## APPENDIX A

**NURS 420 POLICY, POWER AND VOICE****Course Objectives****Clinical Reasoning and Critical Inquiry:**

1. Uses a range of appropriate theory and evidence resources to provide support for political, policy and professional decisions.
2. Integrate beginning skills of policymaking and the political process with nursing skills in order to advocate for clients and the profession.

**Communication**

3. Explores a variety of effective communication strategies to enhance personal influence and power in nursing and health care.
4. Evaluates written and oral communication strategies used to influence others and impact policymaking in nursing and health care.
5. Utilizes effective and appropriate strategies, such as media and policy analysis, to assess, plan and begin evaluating policymaking related to nursing and health care.

**Experiential Learning:**

6. Examines the roles of graduate level nursing and its impacts on the profession and society.
7. Analyzes change agent and advocacy roles of nurses in the policymaking process for impacts on self, the profession and health care.
8. Explores the uses and impacts of groups and coalitions in the policymaking process and on the nursing profession.
9. Develops beginning awareness of personal and collective power to effect change for oneself, one's clients and the profession.

**Global World View:**

10. Identifies the impacts of values, diversity and ethics on political and policymaking processes for selected health and/or professional issues.

**Professionalism and Leadership:**

11. Explores ways to influence public and organizational policymaking by critically examining health and professional nursing issues.
12. Engages peers/colleagues about power, policymaking and political advocacy in nursing.


APPENDIX B

**NURS 420 Course Calendar (Spring 2011)**

## APPENDIX B

### NURS 420 Course Calendar Spring 2011

Calendar is subject to change— Updated P. Gehrke, 1/15/11, Revised 2/18/11

Date	Topic	Reading/Deadlines
Jan. 19	<b>Live for All</b> --Introductions; Orient to course; <b>NN 431</b>	Sullivan, Chapters 1 & 2
Jan. 26	Power, Image & Influence	Sullivan, Chapters 3, 4; Gordon article (handed out in last week's class); look for policy meetings to attend
Feb. 2	Career & Graduate School	Sullivan, Chapter 7; Mason, Leavitt & Chaffee (ML & C) Chap. 19 (the <i>Taking Action, Policy Spotlight</i> , or <i>Vignettes</i> are extra readings outside the chapters in ML & C; very interesting but not required)
Feb. 9	Collective Power, Image & Politics	Sullivan Chapters 6 & 11; ML & C, Chapters 1, 2 (skim) & 3; <b>Advocacy Paper Topic to Faculty (done in class)</b>
Feb. 16	Political Advocacy & Nursing	ML & C Chapters 22, 23; <b>Newsletter Assignment--#1 Meeting Reflection due by 4:00 pm</b>
Feb. 23	Nuts & Bolts Advocacy Skills	ML & C Chapters 24, 25
Mar. 2	Policy & Issue Analysis Mar. 9 Statehouse Info	ML & C, Chapters 5 (pages 75-80) & 6; <b>Newsletter Article #1 due by 4:00 pm Thurs., Mar. 3 by 8:15 am</b>
Mar. 9	<b>Live for All--Statehouse Visit</b> Meet at Garden Level Welcome Center. See Weekly Classes Mar. 2 for more details.	ML & C, Chapter 27; choose 1 <i>Taking Action, Policy Spotlight</i> , or <i>Vignette</i> from Chapters 24, 25 or 27
Mar. 16	Political Skills & Communication	ML & C, Chapters 7 & 11 <b>OR</b> Sullivan, Chapters 5 & 9; <b>Advocacy Paper Rough Page 1 Text Due in Class; Advocacy Paper Draft to Chosen Reviewer</b>
Mar. 23	Power of Coalitions & Affiliations	ML & C, Chapters 26 & 31; <b>Newsletter Assignment--#2 Meeting Reflection due by 4:00 pm Thurs., Mar. 24 by 8:15 am</b>
Mar. 28 – Apr. 3	 <b>Spring Break</b>	Enjoy the time off!
Apr. 6	Career & Workplace Power	ML & C, Chapters 16, 17 & 18
Apr. 13	<b>Live for All</b> --Career/Workplace Power; Pre-production, <b>NN 431</b>	Sullivan, Chapters 12 & 13; <b>Newsletter Article #2 due by 4:00 pm Thurs, Apr. 14 by 8:15 am</b>
Apr. 20	<b>Live for All</b> --Production Day, <b>NN 431</b>	ML & C, Chapter 9; Sullivan, Chapter 11 (all are

		repeats from earlier assignments) <b>Advocacy Paper Final Paper &amp; Drafts due by 4:00 pm Thurs., Apr. 21 by 8:15 am</b>
Apr. 27	<b>Live for All</b> --Production Day, <b>NN 431</b>	Sullivan, Chapter 15
May 4	Gems & Legacies	Final class--Thanks everyone!

APPENDIX C

**Getting the Most Out of Class**



## APPENDIX C

## Getting the Most Out of Class



## Success in Learning ONLINE or LIVE

Sometimes students arrive at senior year thinking "what is there new to learn in nursing at this point?" Often the most profound insights come from re-thinking something that one has always accepted as truth. Policy, politics and nursing advocacy can be areas for this kind of re-examination.

*That's what learning is. You suddenly understand something you understood all your life, but in a new way."*

*Doris Lessing, 1919-, British Novelist*

Students in this class are offered the choice of learning in an ONLINE HYBRID and a LIVE traditional section of class. Some information is provided here about the two versions of the class.

**Getting the Most out of Class**

This is an interactive, participative course. Students who are the most successful in this class schedule time in their weekly planning for class and study regardless of the choice of **LIVE** or **ONLINE HYBRID** versions of class. Some explanation of each version of the class and some tips will help you maximize your learning.

**Here's some information about each class section that may help you see how they both fit together....**

**All Students--Both ONLINE HYBRID and LIVE Versions**

This is a 3-credit class so plan 3 hours a week seat time (means in front of computer for **HYBRID ONLINE** or in class for **LIVE** classes) **plus** 2-3 hours per week per credit (6-9 hours) preparation each week (total is 9-12 hours/week).

- Both versions do the same weekly discussion assignment (in class or online follow up activities may differ slightly).
- Both versions do the same **Course Projects** and use the same **Calendar**.
- Movement between sections must adhere to university guidelines for adding/dropping classes.
- Both versions (all students) attend required classes that specify **LIVE for ALL** on the Calendar together.

**Weekly—Prior to Wednesday**

--Logon to the BlackBoard NURS 420 course site.

--Read **Announcements**.

--Click on the **Calendar**. Quickly check the week's topic, essential readings, assignments and due dates.

--Do the reading assignment. Do additional reading as time & interests allow.

--On Wednesdays, by 11:00 am, each week's class is posted in BB and ready for discussion (some weeks, faculty may open it early).

--Go to the course BB home page and click on the button **Weekly Classes**. Here are folders for every week of class.

--Click on the current week's class date (example: click on Week One, date whatever). Once you are at each weekly class date, there will be instructions to guide you to the links and activities required for that week.

--For each week's class, there are several items:

- **Topic of the Week.** This introduces the week's concepts and poses the large questions to ponder.
- **Class.** This includes an essay or information pertinent to the topic from the faculty.
- **Discussion Assignment.** Expect to find the specific discussion assignment for each week here. Complete this on your own and bring to discussions, live or online.
- **"Other".** Additional materials, handouts, etc. for the class topic of the week. This may also include information about topics often given time in live classrooms such as special focus on course assignments.

**LIVE** class time in student learning groups and frequent "check backs" to **ONLINE** discussion boards give students the opportunity to interact and discuss with each other. This is critical in learning concepts and demonstrating learning to course faculty. Please see the *Class Participation Evaluation Criteria* in the syllabus or at *Course Projects* for description of discussion behaviors at each grade level for both ONLINE Hybrid and LIVE versions of class.

<b>ONLINE HYBRID</b>	<b>LIVE Traditional</b>
<p>--Increased flexibility, convenience &amp; access            --May be easier to share your learning and ideas about topics, especially personal or controversial ones            --Time to form thoughts in writing before making them public            --More equal sharing of ideas from all students            --Complete class discussion in 3 clock hours or less each week            --Practice ONLINE learning as preparation for graduate school</p>	<p>--Immediate face-to-face format and feedback            --Increased assurance of access to faculty in class            --Complete class discussion in 3 clock hours on campus each week            --Practice sharing personal or controversial topics in person            --Practice listening and sharing in equitable ways            --Bring laptops to class each week</p>
<p>Complete the Weekly Discussion Assignment &amp; <u>post it in the designated Group Discussion Forum</u>. This is the basis for the week's discussion. Respond to other students' and faculty postings and questions. This interaction will deepen and stretch your thinking about the topic for the week.</p>	<p>Complete the Weekly Discussion Assignment <b>PRIOR</b> to coming to class. <u>Bring 2 copies of the completed assignment to class.</u> Turn one into faculty at the beginning of the class. Use the other for discussion. In-class learning activities will deepen and extend the thinking about the topic for the week.</p>
<p>One student from each Discussion Forum completes a Synopsis (a summary) of each week's discussion and posts it in the Weekly Synopsis forum in BB.</p>	<p>One student from each class learning group completes a Synopsis (a summary) of each week's discussion and posts it in the Weekly Synopsis forum in BB.</p>

A student's **ONLINE HYBRID week** might look like this one. Start by looking at the **Calendar** and **do the reading for the week prior to each week's class**.

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p><b>Prior to Wednesday:</b> <b>Plan ahead</b> for reading time &amp; time to complete discussion assignment. Check Calendar.</p> <p>11:00 am. New class posted. Check-in &amp; see what's expected. Begin discussion after reading done.</p>	<p>Begin (or finish) posting discussion assignment .</p> <p>(Plan for assignment time.)</p>		<p>Check back to further develop as signment &amp; discussion</p> <p>(Plan for approx. 1 hour each check-in time)</p>	<p>If haven't checked back yet, check in now to further develop assignment &amp; discussion</p>	<p>Check Blackboard again. Continue participation in discussion</p>	<p>If haven't checked back, check Blackboard again. Continue participation in discussion.</p>	<p>Synopsis posted of week by group member. (Synopsis writer plans extra time)</p> <p>11:00 am. New class posted. Check-in.....(repeat cycle)</p>

A student's **LIVE, traditional week** might look like this one. Start by looking at the **Calendar** and **do the reading for the week prior to each week's class**.

Wednesday	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.
<p><b>Prior to Wednesday:</b> <b>Plan ahead</b> for reading time &amp; time to complete discussion assignment. Check Calendar.</p> <p>11:00 am. New class posted. Discussion assignment is due in one week at next live class, 11:40 am.</p> <p>Attend Class 3 hours. Bring 2 copies of written assignment which was posted last week. Do in class activities. Present info to class.</p>	<p>Synopsis of discussion posted by group member. (Synopsis writer plans extra time)</p>		<p>Do reading.</p>	<p>Do reading.</p>	<p>Do written discussion assignment.</p>	<p>Complete written discussion assignment.</p>	<p>Attend class 3 hours. Bring 2 copies of discussion assignment.</p> <p>11:00 am. New class posted. Check-in.....(repeat cycle)</p>

APPENDIX D

**Faculty Essay**

## APPENDIX D

## Faculty Essay

**Week 2 Power and Image****Topic**

This week's class topic will take us into considering nursing's image and its relationship to power and influence. The reading\*\* in the texts is quite good and may stimulate some controversial opinions and lively discussion in your groups.

Numerous polls in the past have shown the general public has said they trust and use information from nurses. Yet the majority of the public does not know what nurses do. While the public overwhelmingly looks upon nurses with favor, the reality is that they know little about the specifics of our jobs and what we contribute to health care.

When you consider the image of nursing, have you ever thought about power? How powerful are nurses? Does society see nurses as powerful? Is having power really necessary for nurses?

These questions will be further explored this week. Please keep reading for the **Essay** for this week and then, the **Discussion assignment** for ONLINE discussion and Live class homework.

**\*\*Readings:** Please see the **Calendar** each week for the **Required reading**. This week is: Sullivan text, Chapters 3, 4, the Gordon article *What do Nurses Really Do?* located in Medscape (instructions are at Week 2 in Bb site), and a Recommended Article by Laura Stokowski (2010, also at Medscape) . Read Sullivan, Chapters 1 & 2 if you didn't finish from last week.

This week's class objectives:

**Clinical Reasoning & Critical Inquiry**

Use evidence from literature, nursing practice and media to examine nursing's image, power & influence.

**Professionalism & Leadership**

Analyze the impact of nursing's image on nurses' abilities to have influence and power in the profession and on health care.

**Communication**

Identify personal strategies which can promote the positive use of nursing's power & influence.

## Power & Image Essay



### What Makes Nursing Leaders Powerful?

Nursing's leaders can provide us with ideas about the use of power and influence. Brief biographies of many nursing leaders can be found at the American Nurses Association [Hall of Fame](#). Contemporary nurse leaders include **Luther Christman, Margretta Styles, Mary Elizabeth Carnegie, Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail** and **Hattie M. Bessent**.

You can also learn about power from leaders from nursing's past:

[Florence Nightingale](#)   [Sojourner Truth](#)  
[Lillian Wald](#)   [Walt Whitman](#)

What did these people have in common?

Yes, they were nurses; they acted for the good of their patients/clients; and yes, they accomplished great things. All upheld ideals of nursing. They presented positive images of nursing to us and to society at large. Reading their vignettes provides only a glimpse of what it took for these people to do what they did. We can imply that they cared very much for the people they served.

But was caring enough?

All were powerful. Yet they weren't powerful because someone magically pronounced the words "ye be powerful!" And, most were not necessarily "born leaders". What made them powerful?

Think about the nurses you know.

Who represents, to you, a powerful nurse?

What is this person like?

What makes them powerful?

What is their image?

How do they project that image to others?

Nursing's leaders were powerful because they had **knowledge and skills**; they believed in their knowledge and understanding of health and illness. They understood the connection of health and illness to communities and to the health of the nation as a whole.

Then, each of them took critical steps that **moved them beyond knowledge alone ...each took ACTION**.

Each of these people became, in a lot of ways, politicians. The authors of your text, Mason, Leavitt & Chaffee (2007), state "Patient care is a highly political endeavor. Politics determines who gets what kind of care from whom and when. Patients are not well served when nurses fail to recognize the political context of care" (p. 3).

Are you ready to become more powerful? Are you ready to use your power?

It's not enough for us to recognize the power we hold individually, though it's a good start. Authors Mason, Leavitt & Chaffee (2002) say "Nurses know from their experience and education what constitutes quality health care and what a healthy society needs. But nurses must learn to recognize that their tremendous power lies in their knowledge of people, their ability to communicate, and their role to advocate for a healthier population" (p.29).



## Influence & Power

Sullivan (2004) talked not only of nurse leaders' examples of influence but of systems' and organizations' influential effects on the image and power of nurses and our profession. She contends that gaining and using influence is a set of skills that can be learned by all nurses.

**Power** and **influence** are inextricably linked in her definition "...power describes the *capacity* to be influential while influence itself is *the use* (emphasis added) of that power" (p. 32). Sullivan discussed **risks** to becoming more influential. Risks include potential for failure, engendering envy and jealousy, setting oneself apart from others, and increasing expectations for performance. How do those stack up against potential opportunities--changing nursing care, re-directing organizations, increasing the health of clients and citizens?



## Are Image & Power Connected?

What would happen if each nurse took seriously the responsibility to contribute to the positive image of nursing? Do you think nurses believe they have this responsibility? I, personally, believe in this obligation. I also believe that nurses who are assertive and powerful project a more favorable image to society. Nurses need to believe we have knowledge and values necessary to improving the health of people in our communities and nation. But it's not just knowledge and values alone that will accomplish this--**power and action are necessary**.

In my early career I frequently had people say to me "It must be so hard to be a nurse." I would sort of shrug my shoulders in sort of an "Aw shucks, anyone could do it" sort of way and change the subject. As I've gathered a few years in this career and thought more about it, I realize I did nothing to promote nursing's overall image with my early response. Did I, unconsciously, because I was shy or embarrassed, promote the idea that nursing was easy? That anyone could do it? That it "was no big deal"? Was I acculturated by nursing culture itself, to shun attention? (Take a look at the article by Suzanne Gordon (2006), ***What do Nurses Really Do?*** for her ideas on this topic.)

Nowadays, I feel very differently. I might answer "yes, it's very challenging and very rewarding". I try to think about what's behind the person's question or statement about nursing. But I do not belittle my contribution, or nursing's contribution to society. By acknowledging my own expertise and that of my peers, all nurses' power is increased and the image that "nursing is essential and valuable" is reinforced to the public.

In the [2010 Gallup annual survey](#) on the honesty and ethics of the professions, nurses topped the poll with 84% of respondents rating nurses highest on honesty and ethical standards when compared to other disciplines. We outranked dentists, pharmacists, physicians, vets, and many others. While this survey does not rate us on how powerful we are, it does show we have the trust of our clients. Imagine, now, how powerful we could be with that trust **plus** assertive action for advocacy and health care.

Another way we acknowledge and assert our collective power is when we praise and draw attention to the excellent nursing works of others. When was the last time you complimented a peer on his or her good nursing care? When was the last time you complimented him or her in front of another nurse, patients, their families, and/or physicians? If you have done it recently, good for you! Authors Buresh & Gordon (2000) say "Each day in the workplace, nurses are performing as "public communicators and educators. What they say and do can elicit the respect and collegial treatment their professional standing deserves, or undermine it" (p. 50).

## Empowerment equals

### Positive Self-Esteem + Knowledge + Effective Communication

#### Ways to Take Responsibility for Enhancing Nursing's Image

- Recognize an image problem exists and each nurse has a responsibility to improve the profession's image.
- Join your professional organizations--ANA, AORN, etc. Collectively, nursing is very powerful.
- Become politically active; run for office--school board, county commissioner, legislator.
- Vote, vote, vote, vote, vote!
- Document activities; establish a power center; keep a professional portfolio.
- Write feature stories for media on nurses.
- Become fluent in writing for various audiences. This increases the ways to get out your message.
- Provide ongoing public service announcements. Focus on services created and controlled by nurses.
- Present educational talks to many audiences.
- Improve the community image: volunteer.
- Any adverse portrayal of nurses should be protested verbally and in writing; monitor get well cards in hospital gift shops, articles in newspapers, etc.
- Establish and support schools of nursing as research and information centers for people, for example, homelessness, etc.
- Increase staff involvement in scholarly activities such as research.
- Promote the portrayal of nursing as physician's peers.
- Be self-confident; this commands respect.
- Be positive. When you see problems, look for ways to solve them.
- Share the positive aspects of nursing with others.
- Go back to school.
- Increase visibility; be sure clients know nursing is responsible for 24-hour care.

Adapted from Black, V.L. & Germaine-Warner, C. (1995). Image of nursing. In Deloughery, G.L. (Ed.) *Issues and trends in nursing* (pp. 470-472). St. Louis: Mosby.

### Keep reading for your Discussion/Homework assignment for this week

#### References

- Buresh, B. & Gordon, S. (2000). *From silence to voice: What nurses know and must communicate to the public* (p. 50). Ottawa: Canadian Nurses Association
- Gordon, S. (2006). What do nurses really do? *Topics in Advanced Practice eJournal*, 6(1). Retrieved from <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/520714>.
- Mason, D.J., Leavitt, J.K. & Chaffee, M.W. (2002). *Policy & politics in nursing and health care* (4th ed.). St. Louis: Saunders, Elsevier Science.
- Mason, D.J., Leavitt, J.K. & Chaffee, M.W. (2007). *Policy & politics in nursing and health care* (5th ed.). St. Louis: Saunders Elsevier.



Stokowski, L. (2010). A letter to Hollywood: Nurses are not handmaidens. Medscape Nurses  
<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/718032> (normally you remove hyperlinks from references but I am leaving this here in case you want to get this article-PG)

Sullivan, E.J. (2004). *Becoming influential: A guide for nurses*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

### Discussion Assignment: Power, Image & Influence

Assignment is for both class versions....

**Each student should answer the following questions.**

**ONLINE Hybrid Students—post your answers and discuss in your group discussion forums; LIVE class Students--write your responses and bring 2 copies to class; one gets turned in to faculty.**

- 1) Do you think nurses are powerful? Why or why not? What evidence from the texts or other literature supports your position?
- 2) What do nurses have to do to become more powerful? Are nurses educated to do this? Again, what evidence or sources do you have to support your opinion?
- 3) What could be the result of gaining power? Are nurses willing to do this? Support your opinions with evidence from texts or other sources.
- 4) What examples of nursing power and/or positive image have you seen this week? (could be in media, at work, school, etc.)

Also--**DO THIS SOMETIME DURING THE WEEK & Report in your Discussions**

**Compliment a colleague** (your peer, your clinical mentor, your co-worker, etc.) about their nursing care this week. It could be face-to-face, in front of patients/clients or in front of other colleagues. If you are not yet working in health care or nursing, it's completely fine to do this at your current job, from an experience in a past job, or even in a nursing class. Report back to your discussion groups--what was it like? How did the other person react? What would happen if you regularly complimented each other on your nursing care?

Reminder: The Gordon article can be found in the file at the top of the Weekly Class for this week. Additional PowerPoints, etc are also posted here as supplemental information.

APPENDIX E

**Class Participation Evaluation Rubric—ONLINE Version**

## APPENDIX E

The **Class Participation Evaluation Rubric—ONLINE Version** will be used to evaluate each student’s weekly performance in classes.

Respectful, sensitive communication is expected at all times in our live and online communications. If at any time this does not occur, there will be conversation between parties &/or faculty to identify the issues and behaviors needed. If communication continues that is less than respectful and civil, a failing grade may be given for Class Participation for the class or course.

Criteria	A (90-100%)	B (80-89.9%)	C (70-79.9%)	D (60-69.9%)	F (59.9 and <)
Involved in learning with others	3 or more posts well distributed throughout the allotted time (includes follow-up to other posts).	2 posts distributed throughout the allotted time (includes follow-up to other posts).	1 post OR multiple posts not distributed throughout the allotted time (includes follow-up to other posts).	1 very brief post. If more than 3 weeks of non-posting occurs, a student will be given 0% for Class Participation.	Fails to post. Not respectful of others in class or class-related activities. If more than 3 weeks of non-posting occurs, a student will be given 0% for Class Participation.
Answers online assignment	Well thought-out response that thoroughly answers the online assignment(s) referencing textbook <b>AND</b> outside resources.	Good response that thoroughly answers the online assignment referencing textbook <b>OR</b> outside resources.	--Response answers part of <b>OR</b> superficial response to online assignment(s). -- May or may not use textbook or outside resources.	--Very brief post that does not answer online assignment(s). --May consistently rely on others to complete assignments/activities.	Fails to post assignment or fails to post within weekly deadlines.
Critical thinking in responses	--Shows strong evidence of own thinking about assignment(s) & activities. --Well supported by facts, statistics, data, quotes, links, etc. from textbook <b>AND</b> outside resources. --Raises appropriate questions. --Goes well beyond what is required.	--Good evidence of own thinking about assignment(s) & activities. --Supported by appropriate, strong evidence from text <b>OR</b> outside resources. --May raise questions <b>OR</b> consider other perspectives.	--Shows some evidence of thinking but tends to respond with own opinion to assignments &/or activities. --Some evidence from text <b>OR</b> outside resource which may/may not support ideas well. --Does not add any new evidence or resources.	--Very brief statement(s) that does not respond to classmates' or faculty discussion &/or demonstrates superficial thought regarding the discussion.	--Fails to post/attend class &/or participate in assignments and/or activities.

			--Tends not to raise questions or consider other perspectives.		
Live Class for All	Attends entire period of each live class. Participates actively in student presentations, discussions, and activities. Is respectful and sensitive to others. Quality of assignments is superior.	Attends 3/4 of live class. Usually participates actively in student presentations, discussions, and activities. Is respectful and sensitive to others. Completes assignments at above average level; may need improvement in 1 or 2 minor areas.	Attends 1/2 of live class. Participates somewhat in student presentations, discussions, and activities. Is there in body but not in spirit. Sometimes less respectful and sensitive to others. Completes assignments at average level; may need improvement in several areas.	Attends 1/4 of live class. Does not participate in student presentations, discussions, and activities. Frequently not respectful and sensitive to others. Assignments may be incomplete, late, and/or of poor quality in many areas.	Fails to attend class(es). Does not complete/turn in assignments.

Copyright 2005 P. Gehrke. Updated P. Gehrke 1/15/11

APPENDIX F

**Post-Course Interview (PCI) Guide**

## APPENDIX F

**Post-Course Interview (PCI) Guide**

Questions in this interview guide are intended to address the research questions and sub-questions and to further illuminate students' Bb discussion transcripts and sense-making of course concepts. Because the study is qualitative, the questions below are illustrative of the type of questions which may be asked depending on themes that emerge from students' Bb course transcripts and initial answers to questions. Further questions, not written here, may be asked to probe students' answers and meanings to achieve greater understanding and clarification of students' perspectives. All questions listed below may not be asked in the interviews.

**Read to participants:** I am conducting research to learn how undergraduate nursing students make sense of ideas like policy making and political advocacy in nursing. I am interested in how you saw and experienced the process of learning about these concepts in the NURS 420 class you just completed. Your answers will contribute to greater understanding of how nursing students learn these concepts. Please know there is no "right" answer to this research and to the questions I am asking. I will make every effort to protect your identity during this study. Some of your direct spoken and/or written quotes may be used in reporting this research; your name will not be used in conjunction with any quotes that might be used. You previously gave your consent to participate in this research and to have this interview audio-taped. Does that consent still apply?

You have the right to not answer any question at any time without penalty whatsoever. You also have the right to ask for audio-taping to be stopped at any time. I may take some notes during the interview. This interview will last about one hour.

Everyone has a way of going about learning new ideas that works for them. Think about your learning and the NURS 420 class you just finished. I'm going to ask some questions that will take you through the beginning of the class to where you are now. Please answer them as you feel best fits you and your learning.

Potential Questions for PCI--

- 1) At the beginning of the semester, how would you have described your views about nursing and political processes?
- 2) What, if anything, in your way of viewing participation in political processes changed as you took this course?
- 3) As you look back on class, what experiences or activities stand out? Describe these. Why do you suppose these stand out for you? How did these contribute to your making sense of political ideas and nursing?
- 4) Most students find both helps and hindrances to their learning in any course they take. What, if anything, helped your learning of political concepts during the semester?
- 5) What, if anything, hindered your learning about political processes during the semester?
- 6) What was most meaningful for you during the course? What did that feel like? How did it show in what you did or learned during the course?

- 7) Have your personal views of political advocacy and nursing been affected as you took this class? If so, or if not, please describe further.
- 8) What impact, if any, do you think the online course environment had on you making sense of political ideas and nursing? Could you explain this further?
- 9) Sometimes students experience “aha moments” when learning. Did anything like that happen to you in this course? If so, please describe it for me.
- 10) Interaction with other students and faculty was part of this course. Did this interaction affect your learning in any way? If so, how? If not, please explain further.
- 11) Has anything changed in your own views of policy making, political advocacy and nursing by taking this class? Please explain to help me understand your answer.
- 12) What idea(s) were not addressed about nursing and political processes that you wish would have been part of the course? Why?
- 13) What is your gender, age, race, ethnicity?
- 14) What e-mail address should I use to send you the research summary in August?
- 15) Do you have anything else you’d like to say as we finish up?
- 16) Is there anything you’d like to ask me?

Thank you for participating in the interview and study. I appreciate your insights.

APPENDIX G

**Memo: Reliability - Coding and Data Analysis**



## APPENDIX G

Memo  
*Reliability: Coding and Data Analysis*

June 27, 2011

At the end of last week, I sent an email to EG a friend, colleague and former classmate in my doctoral program. She had offered to assist in my dissertation to review things, be available for questioning, advice, etc. I asked her to assist me with reliability checking for my coding and data analysis. She agreed. I sent her the interview transcript of #009 for her to read and check using Charmaz's grounded theory method using gerunds for initial data coding....

She coded 6 pages of 009's 20-page transcript. After sending it to me this morning, I read her coding and compared it to my original coding. Using the process of code checking outlined in Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 64-65), I used the formula:

$$Reliability = \frac{Number\ of\ codes\ in\ agreement}{Number\ of\ codes\ in\ agreement + disagreement}$$

$$Reliability = \frac{90}{90 + 21}$$

$$Reliability = 90/111$$

$$Reliability = 81\%$$

This rating is prior to any discussion about the codes. I called EG and we then discussed the areas of differences and interpretations made in our coding. The table below documents these and identifies resolution.

Line from 009 Transcript	PG code	EG code	Resolution
009: Page 1 "...maybe it wouldn't have occurred to me to talk about govt-related politics."	Not connecting govt-related politics and nsg	Talking about govt related politics is new	We talked about the context for this question & response. Respondent 009 is recalling her views on this prior to starting the 420 course. She would not yet have known about this "new" knowledge. <b>The "not connecting" code is probably more accurate of the context. Use "not connecting".</b>
009: Page 1 "...I didn't, I didn't see it when related to government."	Not relating nsg and govt politics	Budding awareness of gov't politics	Again, due to question intent of thinking back prior to the course starting, the "not relating" code is probably more accurate. "budding awareness" may, however, reflect a higher level code for processes seen later in interviews related to "broadening views" or to "opening eyes" as awareness broadens. <b>Consider this code as I move to focused coding level.</b>
009: Page 2 " yes, yes! I discovered there was a lot more	Acknowledging her learning	Connecting nsg & govt politics	We discussed and this probably comes down to word choice and emphasis. Many lines could have more than one code (Charmaz also says this). EG code more accurately identified

nursing in governmental politics”			most of the line. Also, previous and subsequent lines influence overall message. <b>Therefore, change code to “connecting nsg and govt politics”.</b>
009: Page 2 “and so you overwhelm us like, right off the bat. There was a...”  <b>Transcript amended. “and so you <b>didn’t</b> overwhelm us like, right off the bat. There was a...”</b>	Overwhelming us right off the bat	Feeling comfortable, not overwhelmed	Discussed this line in the context of the whole. EG, when seeing the whole response as saying class is set up well, little bit each week to learn, & liked the class, says she read this as “you do not overwhelm us”...and missed the negative. However, when I went back and listened to the transcript again, I was surprised to hear the student did actually say “...you <b>didn’t</b> overwhelm us” <b>Transcript amended. “and so you <b>didn’t</b> overwhelm us like, right off the bat. There was a...”</b> <b>Researcher coding changed to use “Feeling comfortable, not overwhelmed” as the code for this line.</b>
009: Page 4 “...so I guess that’s different...I mean if you’re gonna call it a hybrid class then you do sort of expect to meet face to face...”	Differing from past OL	Chiding self	These codes were so different that we discussed them. This illustrates my literalness in looking line by line and failing to see how this line related to the whole of the response here. EG picked up on this very well. In reality, when listening again, I could hear the student making fun of herself. <b>I changed the code to “chiding self” as suggested by EG.</b>
009: Page 4 “Well, I liked that, because I’m one of those people that likes, likes to work in the middle of the night...[laughs]..”	Liking OL portion of class & Liking to work in the middle of the night	Liking hybrid & Working when wanting to & Working in middle of night	We both identified 2 codes that were the same. I thought EG’s additional code “working when wanting to” captured an idea I might not want to lose...this, too may actually translate into a higher level code as it is coming out in many other students’ interviews. <b>Add “Working when wanting to” code to describe this passage along with the other two codes previously identified.</b>
009: Page 4 “accessing the information...one is a biggie for me, when it’s convenient for me...”	Having info at her convenience	Honoring multiple roles of students	The code by PG is more accurately descriptive of the line here. The code by EG is a possibility for a higher level code which may describe other students’ rationale for liking the hybrid class, so consider this when moving to focused or higher level codes. <b>Retain the code by PG at this time.</b>
009: Page 5 “So...that’s really nice.”	Seeing convenience as nice	No code given to this line.	After discussion, this was seen as an area where the differences between researchers would be evident. I as novice, felt the need to include this in the line by line descriptive coding as it captured a new thought not explicitly identified in the other codes for the response. EG as a more experienced researcher, felt it had been captured adequately... <b>For the time being, retain the code by PG.</b>

009: Page 5 “...trepidation before going into the class that this was going to be boring...”	Going to be boring maybe	Preconceived notions	This again, seemed to be a difference of the level of coding...EG’s code being descriptive but a little more general, perhaps of a category that may consist of other kinds of notions from other students, too. PG’s code is more specific to this line and student and contains the description of the type of preconception. <b>Retain the PG code at this time....consider the use of EG’s code for focused level coding.</b>
009: Page 5 “...blank, I don’t quite remember all of the topics...you know, a few stick out in my mind. “	Not remembering all topics & Remembering some stand out topics	Forgetting all topics & Remembering some topics	The real difference in these codes by PG and EG is in the first code. PG’s “not remembering all topics” differs in meaning from EG’s “forgetting all topics”. <b>After discussion, PG’s code is retained.</b> The only difference on the second code is the inclusion of the word “stand out”. The meaning is essentially the same. <b>No change made on this.</b>
009: Page 6 “[laughs] “one of the only textbooks we read this semester” [laughs].”	Laughing when admitting texts aren’t always read	No code	This is probably a place where researcher differences would occur in the decision to code or not. Because PG has on-going knowledge of the course and nsg program, I have insights into this coming up at other times and courses. For me as a teacher and student, it has significance. EG and I, in discussion codes, realize these layers of experience and meaning will color our decisions about significance and inclusion about coding. EG acknowledges some codes will be different due to these constructions. <b>No change, retain PG code.</b>

APPENDIX H

**Synergy of Learning on DB**

APPENDIX H

**Table H.1 Synergy of Learning on DB**

Line by line coding	Thematic codes	Focused code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing was snowball effect Casey-9</li> <li>• Starting the DB process with 1 person's idea Casey-9</li> <li>• Viewing others' learning Casey-10</li> <li>• Seeing &amp; thinking about responses Lee-6</li> <li>• Seeing what others understood Sidney-8</li> </ul>	Viewing others' learning	Experiencing synergy on DB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulling energy of words Casey-10</li> <li>• Feeling drawn to DB often Casey-10</li> <li>• Bouncing ideas off others on DB Casey-7</li> <li>• Being drawn back to discussions Casey-10</li> <li>• Wanting to participate Leslie-6</li> <li>• Finding self interested Leslie-6</li> <li>• Being similar to checking Facebook Leslie-6</li> <li>• Wanting to respond to others Casey-10</li> <li>• Checking in to see who responded Leslie-6</li> </ul>	Discussing as compelling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striking a chord learning with others Casey-10</li> <li>• Sparking each others' learning on DB Casey-10</li> <li>• Supporting each other's learning OL Jesse-9</li> <li>• Postings by others encourage thinking Casey-8</li> <li>• Sharing responses led to more thinking Casey-8</li> <li>• Having passion for ideas Casey-10</li> <li>• Bouncing new ideas around Robin-12</li> </ul>	Sparking each other's learning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing ideas online thru discussion Casey-8</li> <li>• Filling in gaps &amp; pieces for learning Jesse-8</li> <li>• Participating was on-going process Taylor-3</li> <li>• Discovering new ideas together Jordan-3</li> <li>• Talking genuinely about many issues Jesse-8</li> <li>• Responding back and forth with excitement Casey-10</li> <li>• Getting something from this Robin-3</li> </ul>	Growing ideas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding new thinking by others' ideas Casey-8</li> <li>• Furthering thinking through group members' questions Sidney-13</li> </ul>	Furthering thinking	

Line by line coding	Thematic codes	Focused code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulating great ideas Leslie-8</li> <li>• Discussing fosters more discussion Casey-3</li> <li>• Feeding off each other was good Taylor-11</li> <li>• Interacting with group members good Taylor-11</li> <li>• Building a relationship together online Jesse-12</li> <li>• Having above the norm group synergy Jesse-11</li> <li>• Perpetuating engagement by involvement Casey-3</li> <li>• Learning from &amp; with others Casey-10</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complementing each other's learning Jesse-9</li> <li>• Having great fun getting to know each other Jesse-12</li> <li>• Enjoying social experience of learning with others Jordan-10</li> <li>• Getting responses was fun and prompted returns to DB Kelly-11</li> </ul>	Having fun	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converging ideas become bigger than at start [giant snowball] Casey-10</li> <li>• Building on what was said by another Kelly-12</li> <li>• Deepening learning thru DBs Casey-9</li> <li>• Extending this kind of support to workplace Jesse-9</li> <li>• Finding importance in conversing &amp; sharing OL together Jesse-8</li> </ul>	Deepening learning	

APPENDIX I

**Schema Used for Early Theoretical Coding**

## APPENDIX I

**Table I.1 Schema used for Early Theoretical Coding**

Theoretical categories	Theoretical codes and focused codes	
Push Starting Learning	Structuring for Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfying structure overall</li> <li>• Having bite-sized learning</li> <li>• Why structuring helped</li> <li>• Knowing expectations for course generally</li> <li>• Identifying requirements easily for DB</li> <li>• Liking clear expectations for DB</li> </ul> Having Choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing activities purposefully</li> <li>• Seeing choices as good</li> <li>• Using choice to explore topics of interest</li> </ul> Liking Hybrid Course Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting on with topics</li> <li>• Not needing lectures</li> <li>• Using live class days</li> <li>• Having good materials</li> <li>• Having materials of right length</li> <li>• Fitting schedules</li> <li>• Meeting personal learning goals/needs</li> </ul>	Finding Few Blocks, Hindrances, Gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not missing info</li> <li>• Not experiencing stumbling blocks</li> <li>• Not recommending changes [of substance]</li> <li>• Identifying one hindrance</li> <li>• Being unclear about some expectations</li> </ul> Rising to Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excelling with high expectations</li> <li>• Knowing faculty is engaged</li> <li>• Decreasing procrastination</li> </ul>
Doing the Work	Reading & Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing text resources</li> <li>• Experiencing Sullivan text as a gem</li> <li>• Using Mason text</li> <li>• Reading aids understanding</li> <li>• Admitting not always reading</li> <li>• Using materials to learn</li> </ul> Doing the reading Reading faculty essays Using links & videos posted by faculty Identifying specific activities	Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing each week</li> <li>• Improving writing</li> <li>• Challenging writing genres</li> <li>• Interesting topics for paper</li> <li>• Learning through Advocacy Paper</li> </ul> Interacting with Peers & Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering engagement through discussion</li> <li>• Generating interest through discussion</li> <li>• Sharing important ideas</li> <li>• Opening eyes through others' ideas</li> </ul>
Learning OL Together	Creating a Climate for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respecting one another</li> <li>• Being open &amp; accepting of people &amp; ideas</li> <li>• Not experiencing putdowns</li> <li>• Desiring more honest communications</li> <li>• Being “lucky”</li> </ul> Committing as a Team to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having leaders in groups</li> </ul>	Learning through Peers' Diversity & Wisdom on DB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressing &amp; learning course ideas</li> <li>• Giving &amp; receiving help in learning</li> <li>• Sharing examples of giving &amp; receiving help</li> <li>• Seeing others' wisdom</li> <li>• Realizing others' perspectives</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being motivated</li> <li>• Competing &amp; collaborating</li> <li>• Finding commonalities</li> <li>• Realizing own &amp; others' multiple commitments</li> <li>• Setting &amp; using norms</li> </ul> <p>Getting a System Down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding one's groove</li> <li>• Discovering &amp; managing challenges</li> <li>• Detailing one student's process (as exemplar)</li> </ul> <p>Experiencing Synergy of Learning on DB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing others' learning</li> <li>• Discussing as compelling (snowball effect)</li> <li>• Sparking others' interest</li> <li>• Growing ideas</li> <li>• Furthering thinking</li> <li>• Having fun</li> <li>• Deepening learning</li> <li>• Finding importance to shared learning together</li> </ul> <p>Not having Synergy in DB Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding too few posts</li> <li>• Being told posting too much</li> </ul> <p>Frustrating times &amp; issues Learning OL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering to check Bb [when vacationing]</li> <li>• Wanting editing in Bb</li> <li>• Keeping discussions fresh</li> <li>• Posting &amp; timing mismatches</li> <li>• Choosing old text edition</li> <li>• Differing perspectives of group assignment [NL]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving understanding</li> <li>• Increasing interest in course topics</li> <li>• Responding to controversy</li> <li>• Having multiple opportunities each week to respond</li> <li>• Monitoring on the side by 1 group</li> <li>• Wanting response</li> <li>• Not hearing from some peers in previous classes</li> <li>• Wondering why fewer responses from group [1 situation]</li> </ul> <p>Evaluating Quality of DB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding DB important to learning</li> <li>• Having good group is key</li> </ul> <p>Interacting with Faculty to Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating performance globally as positive</li> <li>• Interacting with faculty in DB</li> <li>• Finding faculty knowledgeable</li> <li>• Identifying positive characteristics</li> <li>• Getting help on Advocacy paper</li> <li>• Being motivated by faculty</li> <li>• Aiding learning on DB</li> <li>• Evaluating fac interaction on DB as surprising &amp; helpful</li> </ul> <p>Acknowledging faculty limits &amp; activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping up with DB</li> <li>• Having limited time</li> <li>• Thinking knowing students individually is hard</li> <li>• Understanding multiple learners' needs in addition to own</li> </ul>
Making it Real	<p>Personalizing Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What personalizing means....(thinking about thinking—metacognition)</li> </ul> <p>Connecting personally with course ideas</p> <p>Experiencing “aha’s”</p> <p>Taking the Political Astuteness Inventory</p> <p>Going through the Advocacy Paper process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing self as part of political processes</li> <li>• Finding a personal passion</li> <li>• Connecting family and/or friend experiences to course ideas</li> <li>• Connecting nursing experiences to course ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Experiencing Political Processes for Self</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending policy meetings</li> <li>• Connecting emotionally to change process</li> <li>• Experiencing Statehouse</li> <li>• Identifying with guest speaker</li> <li>• Putting learning into context</li> </ul> <p>Exploring Current Events and Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awakening to current health issues</li> <li>• Learning from writing Advocacy Paper (AP)</li> <li>• Seeing AP as real</li> <li>• Thinking deeply about issue</li> <li>• Being persuasive</li> <li>• Being clear and specific</li> <li>• Developing written voice</li> <li>• Writing to policy maker</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing when it's not real</li> </ul>	Finding and using sources
Learning Deeply	Learning by Checklist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marking items off checklist</li> <li>• Doing work to get it done</li> <li>• Pulling it off but missing out on learning</li> </ul>	Learning Deeply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfying course learning</li> <li>Enjoying writing</li> <li>Enjoying political activities</li> <li>Enjoying learning in groups</li> <li>Finding personal enjoyment</li> <li>• Recognizing learning achievements</li> <li>Broadening horizons</li> <li>Seeing &amp; feeling learning gains</li> <li>Seeing areas for growth</li> </ul>
Taking a Political Journey?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having preconceptions about politics</li> <li>• Having preconceptions about nursing</li> <li>• Having preconceptions about nursing &amp; politics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceiving political processes differently</li> <li>• Perceiving nursing differently</li> <li>• Perceiving nursing &amp; politics as connected</li> </ul>

APPENDIX J

**Engaging in Learning Together Conditional Relationship Guide**

APPENDIX J

**Table J.1 Engaging in Learning Together Conditional Relationship Guide, 9/6/11.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>When (during...)</b>	<b>Where (in...)</b>	<b>Why (because...)</b>	<b>How (by...)</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>Push Starting Learning</b>	Promotive course design, structure, processes, and expectations that mobilized students to take responsibility for their learning & be actively involved in the course.	During all aspects of course—emphasized early  Having Structure for success  Reading, Writing, Talking to Learn  Rising up to Expectations	In Learning OL Together  Interacting with faculty	Because of Having Structure for Success  Reducing procrastination  Creating Interest  Connecting to evaluation  Knowing peers & faculty are reading their work	By knowing expectations  Knowing faculty is involved & present  Having choices	Meeting personal learning needs  Having satisfying learning  Seeing desired results happen  Generating more interest than thought possible
<b>Doing the Work</b>	Doing the Work is putting in the time & effort OL, in live class, and outside of class to do Reading, Writing & Interacting with Peers as well as Experiencing political processes for the course.	During weekly homework preparation  Doing reading  Writing to learn  Doing course assignments like Advocacy paper	In Reading & Learning  Writing & Learning  Using Advocacy paper to learn  Learning OL Together  Making it Real	Because Knowing peers reading their work  Knowing faculty involved in DB  Generating interest  Connecting to evaluation	By immersing in course concepts actively  Generating Interest  Sharing important Ideas	Seeing real learning achievements  Learn how political ideas were intertwined in nursing  Improving writing  Finding and using internet and other resources
<b>Learning OL Together</b>	Learning OL Together describes and explains the process of learning & discussing OL together in	During weekly OL discussions to discuss course topics.	In Bb OL learning groups	Because Getting a System Down	Wondering what others thought about their ideas	Learning through Peers' Diversity & Wisdom on DB

Category	What	When (during...)	Where (in...)	Why (because...)	How (by...)	Consequence
	learning groups. It is complex and involves 2 primary interactive processes-- Student to Student and Student to Faculty.	Experiencing Synergy of Learning on DB  Committing as a Team to Learning		Committing as a Team to Learning Creating a Climate for Learning  Knowing faculty engaged on Db  Knowing peers are reading their work	Experiencing Synergy of Learning on DB	Opening Eyes through discussion with others Becoming collegial
<b>Making it Real</b>	This is a process whereby ideas from the course become personal and real for the student. Understanding has gone beyond theoretical to real world and has practical meaning for the individual student.	During Exploring Current Events and Issues  Experiencing Political Processes (for self)  Learning OL Together	In Experiencing Political Processes for self  Attending policy meetings  Experiencing Statehouse  Learning OL Together	Because of Push Starting Learning  Doing the Work  Learning OL Together	By Connecting personal experiences with course ideas  Finding a personal passion  Connecting family or friend experiences to concepts  Connecting nursing to course ideas	Viewing Nursing differently  Viewing Politics Differently  Seeing connections for nursing and politics
<b>Learning Deeply [Vs. Learning by Checklist]</b>	This is both a process and an outcome. By doing the previous 4 processes, participants saw learning gains while taking the course as well as seeing results at course end. Learning OL Together was particularly important to 100% of participants in facilitating this.	Push Starting Learning  Doing the Work  Learning OL Together  Making it Real	DBs  Policy meetings  Statehouse  Faculty contact	The 4 processes help to explain why and how this happened.  Participants accepted learning expectations and made them their own.  Bite-sized learning	Immersion in concepts  Talking about it with peers & faculty  Reflecting in homework  Reflecting during	Seeing learning as successful, satisfying  Gaining knowledge and skills in political processes, sometimes despite early feelings of not wanting to learn  Strengthening learning skills like writing

Category	What	When (during...)	Where (in...)	Why (because...)	How (by...)	Consequence
<b>Becoming Political</b>	This is both a process and outcome. Participation in all processes helped participants on the path to integrating political knowledge and skills into their nursing self.	For some, a gradual process during the course of the class  Dependent on participant's knowledge and view of politics and nursing roles	Through course activities, reflection, & discussion	Because: Disciplinary view fostered more interest in subject and application to their roles	interview  By reflecting on changes from pre- to post-course By examining how they learned	Understanding nursing's political potential  Viewing Political processes differently Connecting Nursing and Political Processes

APPENDIX K

**Verification E-Mail (Member Check)**

## APPENDIX K

## Verification E-Mail (Member Check)

August 21, 2011

Dear Participant [personalized with name]:

Thank you very much for your time and involvement in my research so far. I have worked hard this summer analyzing your interviews and the literature related to how students learn about political ideas in nursing. You previously gave your consent to participate in this research and to review results. You have the right to not answer any question(s) at any time without penalty whatsoever. If you choose to continue to participate, your reply to this e-mail will serve as your assent unless you state otherwise.

It would help me to be sure I am on the right track if you would read the attached 1 ½ page summary of the Grounded Theory which has emerged from the data in your interviews and give me some input.

In Grounded Theory research, the data is analyzed and comes together in the form of a theory that describes a process. In this case, what I am presenting here is my interpretation of what you and the other participants told me about your experiences and learning process in the NURS 420 course.

This may not be like research reports you are used to reading as you won't see lots of numbers and the specific data. This is qualitative research with the purpose of generating a theory to explain the learning process experienced by students in the NURS 420 course. Be assured, in my dissertation report, there is specific data to support all the processes I have outlined in the 1 ½ page summary. I will send you an invitation to hear the full, final report later this fall.

Your input would help me make the theory as reflective as possible of your learning. I will use your input here to help refine the theory as I write my report. You can just hit "Reply" to this e-mail and send your input that way or you can ask me to call you and we can talk by phone. I will not audio-record your answers as I did before but will take notes.

After you read the summary, please answer the following questions.

- 1) Could you see your experience of the NURS 420 class portrayed in the theory about learning in the class?
- 2) Did the theory "ring true" according to your own experience? Does it made sense?
- 3) What suggestions, if any, do you have for me?

You can just hit reply and **copy** your answers into the e-mail back to me. If you want to talk to me by phone, just indicate that in your e-mail and I will be in touch soon.

Again, I very much appreciate your input and time. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pam



APPENDIX L

**Final Engaging in Learning Together Coding Schema**

## APPENDIX L

**Table L.1 Final Engaging in Learning Together Coding Schema**

Theoretical Categories	Codes
Push Starting Learning	Using Structure for Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing expectations</li> <li>• Decreasing procrastination</li> <li>• Satisfying structure &amp; design</li> </ul> Taking Charge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing purposefully</li> <li>• Having control</li> </ul> Rising to Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing faculty &amp; peers reading their work</li> <li>• Meeting personal learning goals/needs</li> </ul>
Doing the Work	Opening up to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being anxious</li> <li>• Opening eyes</li> </ul> Getting into Reading & Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using reading to learn</li> <li>• Using writing to learn</li> </ul>
Learning Online (OL) Together	Committing as a Team to Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting &amp; using norms</li> <li>• Experiencing collegiality</li> </ul> Creating a Learning Climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respecting one another</li> <li>• Buffering through DB</li> </ul> Getting a System Down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding one's groove</li> <li>• Discovering &amp; managing challenges</li> <li>• Monitoring</li> </ul> Interacting with the Instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating supportive environment for learning</li> <li>• Being valued</li> <li>• Acknowledging faculty activities &amp; limits</li> </ul> Learning through Peers' Wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing ideas together</li> <li>• Experiencing synergy</li> </ul>
Making it Real	Experiencing Political Processes for Self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconnecting with the world</li> <li>• Putting learning into context</li> </ul> Personalizing Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding a passion</li> <li>• Connecting personally &amp; professionally</li> </ul>
Learning Deeply	Learning Deeply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing learning achievements</li> <li>• Seeing areas for growth or action</li> <li>• Finding enjoyment</li> <li>• Contrasting with learning by checklist</li> </ul>
Becoming Political	Becoming Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing preconceptions about politics &amp; nursing</li> <li>• Perceiving political processes differently</li> <li>• Expanding notions of nursing</li> <li>• Recognizing politics is part of nursing</li> </ul>