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An exploratory case study of the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment

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AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AMONG BACCALAUREATE NURSING STUDENTS IN A COOPERATIVE GROUP LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by

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God promises us we are never alone on our journey of life. I held onto that promise as I journeyed through the doctoral experience. To Him, I give complete credit for completion of this process.
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment. The following research questions were formulated to guide the research: (1) In a cooperative group learning environment, how do the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning? (2) In a cooperative group learning environment, how do the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development? Students enrolled in an upper division nursing program were selected for this study. Age, gender, and ethnicity were considered in placing students in five groups.

Data included student journals, interviews, and observations using protocols to form a case study database. Data and methodological triangulation resulted in five analytical case studies. Using grounded theory, data were analyzed using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method and Spradley’s (1980) componential analysis method. Using Moreno’s (1934/1953) network analyses, sociometric indices were done on the social interactions. The mean numerical final exam scores for each group were used to triangulate data quantitatively.

Sociometric indices revealed that social interactions of students working in groups have a moderate to high influence on learning of the course content and a moderate influence on professional development. Themes influencing students’ learning of the course content related to shared knowledge, teamwork, group structure, and group activity. Themes impeding students’ learning related to student relationships, ineffective group activities, and lack of student involvement. Themes influencing professional development related to role development, interpersonal relationship skills, teamwork, and shared knowledge. Themes hindering
professional development related to ineffective group activities, inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills, and lack of student involvement. Final course grades were not significantly different.

Results of this study indicate some students’ professional development is promoted by working in groups. Future studies focusing on the outcome measurements of knowledge development and professional socialization from other learning theories, such as problem-based learning and web-based learning, are recommended.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require (Palmer, 1998, p. 11).

Teaching comprises more than the act of imparting discipline-specific information; learning comprises more than the act of receiving information. Some teaching strategies, such as group work found in cooperative group learning environments, are designed to involve social interactions among students. In group work, students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning, thus, influencing their ability to learn the course content. In group work, students develop interpersonal relationship skills, which are important to their professional development.

As a practicing registered nurse for more than twenty-five years and a nursing educator for eighteen years, I live in two worlds: The world of nursing education couched within an institution of higher education, and the world of nursing practice couched within the health care industry. Both worlds are constantly being shaped and (re)formed by changes within the health care industry. The balance is precarious as the two worlds of nursing education and nursing practice collide, with changes within the health care industry being just one lever that creates upheavals in one or the other world. For example, when I began my career as a nurse educator, buzz words such as “acute care,” “hospital-based nursing,” and “nurse-centered goals” described a biomedical illness-oriented health care industry. To teach students the discipline-specific information that prepared them for employment in acute care settings, nursing educators used didactic presentations, often relying on slides and transparencies. Nursing educators used these
lecture methods to distribute technical and procedural knowledge, which applied to clinical
settings, to many students. Nursing educators were authoritarian experts whose main role was to
distribute knowledge and model professional behaviors to students (Skiba, 1997; Twigg, 1994).

Today, buzz words in nursing education are “community-based nursing,” “research-based
practice,” and “health promotion and wellness”; this orientation requires different teaching
strategies to develop students professionally in a changing health care arena. Complex, legal,
educational, and professional problems face nurses today. Students’ educational preparation
emphasizes the need for more than rote memory, knowledge of skills, and the ability to follow
directions. Nursing educators continue to move out of their comfort zone of reliable didactic
presentations to more creative strategies. Students are being forced to move out of their comfort
zone of passive learning to participate in their own learning process (Billings & Halstead, 1998).

Changes in health care, primarily those that move from an illness-oriented focus to a
primary-care wellness focus, have created a turmoil for nursing education. Tanner (1990), a
nursing curriculum theorist, addressed this change at a 1989 National Conference on Nursing
Education:

Never before in our history have there been such compelling reasons for serious study of
our educational programs and educational reform. We continue to struggle with our
content-overloaded curricula that attempt simultaneously to “prepare” nurses to practice
in a biomedically oriented disease-care system and to educate nurses to be responsible
health care professionals committed to the social changes necessary for health promotion
and disease prevention . . . The curriculum revolution means opening up to new
possibilities for the ways in which to educate our students (p. 296, 298).

Tanner (1991) further advocates that nursing educators must explore theoretical models,
which improve the teaching-learning process and redefine teacher and student relationships.
However, Tanner fails to include a (re)definition of student to student relationships in her appeal
to nursing educators.
According to leaders at the National Conference on Nursing Education, the emphasis on redefining relationships in the classrooms has only recently begun in nursing education (Tanner, 1990). In her report to the National League for Nursing (an agency that sets educational standards for nursing programs), Twigg (1994) suggests teachers change their roles from knowledge distributors to facilitators. As facilitators, teachers can design strategies which promote students’ involvement in their learning process. This involvement is crucial in the development of their critical thinking skills as they learn the course content (Billings & Halstead, 1998).

Professional development of students into the discipline of nursing begins in basic nursing programs (Chitty, 1997). The process of professional development occurs when the students internalize and develop an occupational identity. Stage and colleagues term professional development as “cognitive apprenticeship” (Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998, p. 44). During cognitive apprenticeship, students acquire an occupational identity through the expertise and modeling of a teacher, thus preparing the student for the culture of the profession.

Students must be “initiated into scientific ways of knowing” to become enculturated into the discipline of nursing (Driver, Hilary, Leach, Mortimer, & Scott, 1994, p. 6). In cooperative group learning, students learn the scientific knowledge not just through the expertise of the teacher, but through a dialogue exchange among students in the group. These exchanges become a shared experience and knowledge is expanded (Goodman, 1986).
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the effect of social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment on course content learning and professional development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

(1) In a cooperative group learning environment, how do the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning?

(2) In a cooperative group learning environment, how do the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development?

In this research, I studied one junior nursing class in which the teacher used cooperative group learning. Students participated in one of five groups. Each group became the basis of a case study. Students within each group who agreed to participate by signing the informed consent were interviewed at least once during the semester. Further, I observed the student interactions among these students while working in their groups. I observed three groups twice throughout the semester. Due to the high rate of absenteeism in two groups, I observed those groups once throughout the semester. I obtained a final copy of students’ course grades at the completion of the semester.

My analysis focused on how social interactions of baccalaureate nursing students working in groups influenced their knowledge of the course content. Further, my analysis focused on understanding how social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students promoted their professional development.
To contextualize this study, the remainder of this chapter includes a discussion on the history of nursing as a profession. Nursing education emerged within the context of the nursing profession. Understanding the ways nursing education has changed over time is important in identifying the problems and opportunities facing nursing education today.

**Evolution of Nursing as a Profession**

As a profession, nursing began when society began seeing the value of women who worked tirelessly caring for the wounded soldiers during the Civil War (Ashley, 1975, Baer, 1985). In this section, I will describe how nursing leaders persevered to move nursing from a training model to a skilled professional model. As the health care industry continues to evolve, so does nursing practice. Research in nursing education is needed to understand how to educate students to become professionals and work collaboratively with other members of the health care team.

**Nursing during 1865 to 1871.** Following the Civil War, physicians and hospital administrators became aware of the importance of women’s roles as nurses. In 1869, the American Medical Association recommended that nursing schools be placed under the auspices of county medical societies. The societies were made up of women from the elite class. These women, known as superintendents, “put nurses in dust caps, wrote the rules for the nurses’ living quarters, and, in general, modeled nursing after their domestic staffs” (Baer, 1985, p. 36). The superintendents felt nurses needed to be trained for hospitals and for private duty in homes. Superintendents’ perceptions that nurses needed to be supportive and nurturing, rather than authoritative, were an extension of how society viewed women’s roles (Ashley, 1975). Yet, women who graduated from these training schools believed they should be responsible for their own education and training (Yost, 1947/1955). Lewenson (1996), in her historical research,
agreed with Yost: “Training nurses worked to support themselves, and in doing so, embodied the ideological framework of the women’s movement which emphasized women’s need for financial independence, higher education, and personal autonomy” (p. xii). Physicians argued that nurses needed to be taught by medical staff and resident physicians. This belief began the conflict between medicine and nursing regarding proper education and supervision of nurses (Chitty, 1997).

Nursing during 1872 to 1900. In 1872, the first American nursing school was opened in the New England Hospital for Women and Children. In this nursing school, students were educated based on scientific principles developed by Florence Nightingale and were graded for their course work similar to contemporary nursing education programs (Kelly & Joel, 1996). This began the era of diploma schools of nursing.

There were many differences between the diploma schools that were being developed in the United States and Florence Nightingale’s schools in England. Florence Nightingale’s schools were successful because nurses ran the schools and were separated from control of administrators and physicians who supervised the hospitals. Another reason for the success of Florence Nightingale’s schools was her belief that the primary goal of the school was education, not free staffing for hospitals.

Diploma schools of nursing in the United States did not follow Nightingale’s example (Catalano, 1996). By 1878, a graduate from New England Hospital, Linda Richards, decided she needed to improve the training process for nurses. Instead of modeling the hospital-based nursing program after Florence Nightingale’s schools of nursing, Richards advocated those nursing schools, such as the one housed at Boston City Hospital, be under the control of a medical board (Catalano, 1996; Kelly & Joel, 1996). In her attempt to improve the training of nurses, Richards
sought to remove the control from female superintendents. She advocated the training of nurses to be under the supervision of male physicians and hospital administrators. Her rationale for this course of action was that the female superintendents were considered to be an outside association to the hospital without a personal stake in supervising nursing care. Richards sought to have the nursing service as part of the hospital business. Thus, Richards’ actions created the idea of a nursing service department to control and supervise nursing care within a hospital system operated by hospital administrators (Richards, 1911/1948). This model still exists in hospital systems today.

Hospitals expanded primarily from the labor support of student nurses, especially in the pre-World War I Era. Nursing education was absorbed into hospitals, resulting in economic value for these institutions. Hospital administrators realized having hospital-based nursing schools provided their institutions with young, disciplined, and cheap labor in exchange for training. Once a nurse finished her training, she was unlikely to be hired by a hospital because it relied on either untrained aides or nursing student labor (Reverby, 1987). These nurses performed their nursing duties in people’s homes.

In 1888, Isabel Hampton became the first nurse superintendent of Johns Hopkins Training School (Baer, 1985). Her mission was to develop uniform educational standards for hospital-based schools of nursing, professional organizations, and registration and licensure for graduate nurses. Hampton contributed to nursing education in three distinct areas: (a) publishing, (b) designing three-year curricula for hospital-based programs; and (c) arranging the first course to develop nurse managers for the hospitals to be taught in institutions of higher education. The era of professional nursing had begun.
Nursing during 1900 to 1927. In 1900, approximately 11,000 women were enrolled in hospital-based training schools. With such an increase of enrollment, training schools were in need of competently trained teachers and administrators (Yost, 1947/1955). Nursing leaders recognized the need for a curriculum that incorporated educational courses to develop nurses for teaching and becoming administrators. It was not until 1909 that Dr. Richard Olding founded the first university-based baccalaureate program in nursing at the University of Minnesota (Catalano, 1996). In 1910, under the creative leadership of Adelaide Nutting, a nurse, the department of nursing was initiated at Teachers College (Yost, 1947/1955). With the expansion of nursing as a profession, American women gained an opportunity to be self-supporting (Lewenson, 1996).

Nursing education continued to move to colleges and universities (Kelly & Joel, 1996). Superintendents, such as Linda Richards, who had previously managed diploma schools of nursing, recognized the need for rigorous standards to guide curriculum development. These superintendents formed an organization, the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nursing, which later became the National League for Nursing. The League’s purposes were to promote the fellowship of members, establish and maintain a universal standard of training, and promote nursing as a profession. By publishing the Standard Curriculum of Schools of Nursing in 1917, the National League for Nursing established a curriculum that would prepare students as they entered a discipline struggling to become identified as a profession. Education, then, became the key to advancing the profession of nursing.

After World War I ended in 1918, admission to universities by women increased (Catalano, 1996). With nursing being taught in colleges and universities, methods of training and educating nurses changed. Nurse educators began teaching theory of nursing practice based on scientific principles in the classroom, and spent less time with “hands on” experience in hospital
settings. Physicians and administrators began complaining that nurses needed less theory and more practice (Kelly & Joel, 1996). They couched this complaint within a context in which the movement of nursing education into colleges and universities caused hospital administrators to feel the loss of their unpaid labor force. Physicians also began resisting the movement of nursing toward becoming a professional organization. They argued “nursing had over stepped its bounds by trying to establish a profession controlled by women nurses” (Ashley, 1975, p. 69).

**Nursing during 1927 to 1950.** The National League for Nursing continued guiding nursing schools with educational standards to improve their programs. They revised the Standard Curriculum of Schools of Nursing in 1937, and renamed it A Curriculum Guide for Schools of Nursing (Bevis & Watson, 1989; Catalano, 1996; Kelly & Joel, 1996). The United States had now entered into World War II. By moving nursing schools into institutions of higher education, nursing sought to gain control of its own practice, education, and research. Now, higher education, instead of hospitals, profited by this movement of the nursing profession. More than 350 schools of nursing were opened in colleges and universities following World War II. Many nurses who practiced during times of war returned to school under the G.I. bill to complete their baccalaureate degrees (Catalano, 1996; Kelly & Joel, 1996).

**Nursing during 1950 until present.** After World War II, and until the mid 1950's, nursing schools continued using A Curriculum Guide for Schools of Nursing for educating nurses. In 1955, the University of Washington School of Nursing published a report of a model developed by Ralph Tyler in 1949. Ralph Tyler believed curricula needed to be organized using an eclectic approach when selecting behavioral objectives, or as many nursing schools called them, terminal objectives (Cherryholmes, 1988). Tyler’s model was characterized by the following:
1. Curricular meaning is determined by relationships among steps in the process.
2. Individual steps do not have educational significance apart from the system in which they are located.
3. The design is ahistorical in that origins of objectives, learning experiences, and evaluation are discussed and analyzed in terms of the immediate situation and not historically.
4. Teachers and students are decentered and not at the center of meaning and curriculum because meaning is determined by relationships among objectives, learning experiences, their organization (in the curricula) and evaluation (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 25).

The National League for Nursing adopted Tyler’s proposal (Bevis & Watson, 1989) because it promised elements of a profession such as “order, organization, rationality, error correction, political neutrality, expertise, and progress” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 25).

Tyler’s model provided structure for a discipline to interpret knowledge, in order to socialize students into a profession. Learning objectives are organized hierarchically using Bloom’s taxonomy. The success of Tyler’s model was attributed to Tyler applying steps of scientific management to the curriculum (Cherryholmes, 1988). The Tylerian model of curriculum development is still in existence in many schools of nursing today. For example, the National League for Nursing expects nursing programs to have “an organizing framework from which courses/objectives/competencies and learning activities flow in a logical progression over the length of the program” (National League for Nursing, 1999, p. 11).

Beginning in 1988, nursing curriculum theorists started to scrutinize the Tylerian model for its effectiveness, threatening its thirty-five-year reign. At the National Nurse Educator’s Conference, members of the National League for Nursing began the arduous task of deinstitutionalizing the Tylerian model from higher education programs (Bevis, 1988; Bevis & Watson, 1989; Chopoorian, 1990; Moccia, 1990; Tanner, 1990). They urged educators, in 1989, to shift their attention to using “learning theories as a basis for teaching, learning, curriculum
development, evaluation and test construction” (National League for Nursing, 1999, p. 12). Members of the National League for Nursing assert that nurse educators should develop teaching strategies based on learning theories that increase students’ awareness of societal values, learning experiences that incorporate a critique of the current health care system, and learning experiences that bring students in contact with persons at high risk—such as individuals with AIDs (National League for Nursing, 1989). Additional areas of concern, expressed by members of the National League for Nursing, include shifting from a focus on training to educating lifelong learners, from teaching procedural techniques that can be learned by rote memory to understanding scientific rationales by using critical and creative thinking skills, and from training in an illness-oriented health care delivery system to educating individuals, families, and communities in a health promotion and prevention system. Nursing leaders view nursing education as the key to advancing the profession (Chinn, 1995; Lewenson, 1996). It is the means to an end—the means to empower students to become “competent, caring, and political activists” within the profession (Billings & Halstead, 1998, p. 234).

**Summary**

Instead of using interactive student-centered approaches where students were encouraged to think independently, nursing educators used methods such as procedure manuals and skill protocols. These methods encouraged rote learning among students. Students relied heavily on teacher input and less on their own personal experience (Baer, 1992). Students assume more responsibility for their own learning and the others in the group while interacting with each other in groups. Group learning requires students to learn by using critical and creative thinking skills. Research which focuses on exploring how students learn the course content while socially interacting in groups enriches the body of knowledge in the nursing literature.
To continue strengthening the professional image of nursing in a changing health care industry, nursing education is faced with the challenge of socializing students into a changing workforce. The new graduate must be able to work collaboratively with other members of the health care team. Nursing educators develop teaching strategies, which require students to work together in groups, simulating what may happen in the workplace. Research, which focuses on exploring how students develop professionally while socially interacting in groups, expands the body of knowledge in the nursing literature.

In the second chapter, I present a literature review on social interactions in classrooms. I also discuss two models of learning: Ralph Tyler’s model of learning and cooperative group learning. Within the context of both models of learning, I discuss how these models influenced student learning and professional development. Chapter three discusses the methods I used to analyze and interpret data. Chapters four through eight describe the findings of the case analyses. Chapter nine includes findings of the cross-case analysis. In Chapter ten, I discuss conclusions, recommendations based on the findings of this research, and implications for nursing education.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Nursing education is facing social and professional challenges that have implications for teaching and learning. For example, teachers are designing different courses to fit the needs of adult learners who live in a multicultural, diverse society (Billings & Halstead, 1998). Roles of the professional nurse include being able to work with interdisciplinary teams as the health care moves from a biomedical illness-oriented focus to wellness, health promotion, and prevention foci (Tanner, 1991; Tanner, 1990). The National League for Nursing is challenging teachers to develop teaching strategies based on learning theories, which heighten students’ awareness of social and political issues. Although teaching strategies in the past produced rote learning, the National League for Nursing recognizes that different teaching strategies are required for today’s demands. Teachers and students struggle with these different teaching strategies in an attempt to promote student participation in their learning and professional development (Tanner, 1991).

The purpose of this study is to explore social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment. Two research questions guided this study: In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning? In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development?

In this chapter, I first discuss social interactions as they take shape in the relationships formed among students in a classroom. Next, I discuss cooperative group learning as a teaching strategy undertaken in nursing programs to encourage active student participation and promote professional development. This teaching strategy is embedded within a curriculum based on
Tyler’s model of learning. Finally, I discuss assumptions about students’ knowledge within both models of learning and professional development.

Social Interactions

J.M. Baldwin’s idea of social interactions has been influenced by George Herbert Mead’s theoretical formulations of symbolic interactionism (Cairns, 1979). According to Cairns, Baldwin believes

the key of social interaction is that social acts and personality cannot be understood independently of the social context in which they are embedded because of the ongoing dialect or interchange between the person and his surrounds . . . One does not merely act in a social relationship; one reacts (Cairns, 1979, p. 4).

Much of the literature about social interactions is found in social constructivism (Stage et al., 1998). In the social constructivism philosophical model, social interactions between a teacher and students and among students are the key to learning. Social constructivist teachers employ teaching strategies encouraging students’ active involvement in the social processes of the classroom. To promote understanding of disciplinary-specific knowledge, students’ sharing of their knowledge is critical. By sharing their experiences, students arrive at some level of commonality in their construction of knowledge. This is termed “intersubjectivity” (Stage et al., 1998, p.40). According to Stage and colleagues, when students can share meanings and social perspectives through a common view of the world in which they live, then intersubjective knowledge has taken place. These meanings become their reality. New knowledge is constructed through multiple perspectives resulting in an appreciation of others’ views.

Dialogue among students is crucial to the social construction of knowledge (Driver, et al., 1994; Stage et al., 1998). The construction of knowledge is based on personal experiences of the students. There may be a gap in personal experiences shared between a teacher and students,
which interferes with the teacher and students’ construction of knowledge. For example, the teacher may share a personal experience about working in the community and the students’ only experiences have been in the hospital.

The role of the teacher, according to the social constructivism model, is one of facilitator. Similar to Tyler’s model of learning, social constructivists believe the teacher is the one to set the stage for learning to occur. The teacher is to guide the students through the process of learning by giving clear instructions and dialoguing with the students. Cognitive development occurs with the combination of talk and guidance (Stage et al., 1998). Whereas Tyler’s model focuses on individual learning, the social constructivism model focuses on the college classroom and the participants in the classroom as the context for learning. Learning is cooperative. It is imperative that students interact and participate within the social context of the classroom for learning to take place.

Tyler’s model and a social constructivism model of learning socialize the students into the culture of nursing. However, Tyler’s model supports individualistic learning, such as assignments that require no assistance from other students, and the social constructivism model supports learning in a social context. The classroom becomes the arena for students to engage in social interactions simulating cultural practices found in the workplace.

In Bandura’s (1993) extensive work on self-efficacy and learning, he found that social interactions among students play a primary role in enhancing a student’s sense of self-efficacy. With the use of cooperative group learning, students measure their achievements against other students similar to themselves. For example, if a student displays better study skills, this may inspire other students to study harder. Some students may choose to work harder on assignments
for the benefit of the group. Or the students may choose not to participate in the group activities if they feel they do not measure up to other members’ achievements or knowledge.

Social interactions among students are not supported in the Tylerian model of learning. To maintain professional relationships, under the Tylerian model, teachers seek to keep the relationship between a teacher and students and among students at a distance. Chitty (1997) distinguishes between social and professional relationships. Social relationships are not time limited, whereas professional relationships are time limited. For example, students will eventually graduate from the nursing program. Social relationships are not necessarily goal-directed, whereas professional relationships are goal-directed. Not being goal-directed during group work presents a problem in the classroom. Social relationships are centered on meeting both parties’ needs, whereas professional relationships are centered on meeting the clients’ needs. Social relationships are under no obligation to solve problems for others, whereas professional relationships are obligated to solve problems for consumers who request help from healthcare providers. Social relationships may or may not include nonjudgmental acceptance, whereas, professional relationships include nonjudgmental acceptance. Social relationships include spontaneous interactions, whereas, professional relationships include planned and purposeful interactions. The challenge for teachers in nursing programs is to combine aspects of social and professional relationships in an attempt to socialize students into the workplace. For example, in a group, students bring a sense of themselves to the group and expect the group to meet their needs. The structure of the group may or may not lend itself to meeting the needs of the group in order to complete the assigned task. Many of the reactions of the group members may be spontaneous allowing for creativity to be displayed by the group members.
Ralph Tyler’s Theory of Learning

Assumptions about student learning

Tyler (1949/1969) views learning similarly to the theory of generalization instead of learning based on stimulus-response theory found in psychology. Tyler asserts, “I tend to view objectives as general modes of reaction to be developed rather than highly specific habits to be acquired” (p. 43). In Tyler’s Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction text, he advocates that the teacher design objectives to guide learning experiences for students. As he writes,

The purpose of a statement of objectives is to indicate the kinds of changes in the student to be brought about so that the instructional activities can be planned and developed in a way likely to attain these objectives; that is, to bring about these changes in students (p. 45).

Tyler (1949/1969) believes learning takes place through students’ reactions to their environment. The term “learning experience” (p. 63), according to Tyler, refers to active participation between students and their environment. He recognizes learning experiences are different for each student. Tyler asserts students learn based on their own interactions with the environment, not necessarily on the teacher’s interactions with the students. However, Tyler does hold the teacher responsible for creating or controlling the environment so students are stimulated to learn. He writes,

The problem, then, of selecting learning experiences is the problem of determining the kinds of experience likely to produce given educational objectives and also the problem of how to set up situations that will evoke or provide within the students the kinds of learning experiences desired (p.65).

In Tyler’s text (1949/1969), he lists general principles in selecting learning experiences for students:
1. The first of these is that for a given objective to be attained, a student must have experiences that give him an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior implied by the objective (p. 65).

2. The second general principle is that the learning experiences must be such that the student obtains satisfactions from carrying on the kind of behavior implied by the objective…If the experiences are unsatisfying or distasteful, the desired learning is not likely to take place (p.66).

3. A third general principle with regard to learning experiences is that the reactions desired in the experience are within the range of possibility for the students involved (p. 66-67).

4. A fourth general principle is that there are many particular experiences that can be used to attain the same educational objectives (p. 67).

5. A fifth principle is that the same learning experience will usually bring about several outcomes (p. 67).

Tyler’s model of learning supports that new insights or new knowledge changes students’ attitudes regarding a situation. Further, Tyler believes if students are dissatisfied with their learning experience, learning does not take place.

Assumptions about professional development

With Tyler’s model of learning, the learning experience is the primary focus (Tyler,1949/1969). Teachers and students are not the focus within the learning experience, only the learning experience itself. The teacher without student participation designs the learning experience. Many times, students’ experiences or positions in life are disregarded as important aspects of the learning experience. This style of learning is similar to what Freire (1970/1996) calls “banking education” (p. 54). In banking an education, teachers are authority figures and students are passive. In this type of classroom experience, students are socialized into the profession to see themselves as objects who are called upon to adapt to circumstances as they are. Students are taught through this process of “banking” to submit to the control of others, and to allow themselves to be limited and molded to conform to the dominant group (Freire, 1970/1996).
Students become socialized in the classroom and, with similar behaviors, enter the workplace. Teachers expect students to conform to policies, put others’ needs first, work long hours on care plans, and make no mistakes (Hedin & Donovan, 1989). These expectations developed students’ behaviors, which were carried into a profession that expected similar behaviors. For example, in the health care system, administrators expect graduates from nursing programs to carry out physicians’ orders and to put the hospital/organizational needs first. The banking style of education disempowers students and sustains autocratic leadership found in the classroom and, later, in the workplace.

Cooperative Group Learning

Assumptions about student learning

Cooperative group learning involves instructional use of small groups in which students complete an academic task (Billings & Halstead, 1998; Cinelli, Symons, Bechtel, & Rose-Conley, 1994; Tanenbaum, Cross, Tilson & Rodgers, 1998). In cooperative group learning, students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning. Four elements are necessary to achieve cooperation among students. There must be positive interdependence among students; face-to-face interactions that promote positive behaviors; individual accountability and responsibility for doing a fair share of work; and group process skills (Cinelli et al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989/1990).

To achieve positive interdependence among students, a teacher establishes assignments of mutual group goals (Cinelli et al., 1994). This includes dividing the tasks, material, resources, or information between group members and making provision for joint rewards. The seating arrangement for students is crucial for success. Students sit close to be able to talk through each
aspect of the assignment. Creating face-to-face interactions helps to achieve positive interdependence.

In order for students to maximize achievement, it is important they assume individual accountability and responsibility in the group (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). Teachers assign students to groups that will work together over a period (e.g., a six-week project). The time provides structure in accomplishing the group’s task. With this structure in place, students can form a base of support, encouragement, and assistance for personally mastering the knowledge, strategies, and skills needed to complete the assigned task. Student participation becomes a method for the teacher to evaluate students’ attainment of knowledge. Students assume responsibility for promoting each other’s learning (MacDermid, Jurich, Myers-Walls, & Pelo, 1992; Schneidewind, 1993; Tinto, 1997).

In a research study on student persistence in higher education by Tinto (1997), students participating in shared learning groups developed a network of support from their peers in the classroom. A community of classroom-based peers served to support students and encourage their continued attendance and class participation. Tinto’s study provided evidence that “the more students are involved, academically and socially, in shared learning experiences that link them as learners with their peers, the more likely they are to become involved in their own learning” (p. 615). Tinto’s study affirmed that students in shared learning groups invest their time and energy to learn.

Assumptions about Professional Development

Students’ professional development is enhanced by using teaching strategies, which encourage collaboration on tasks instead of competition, dialogue instead of monologue, and a sharing of personal experience (MacDermid et al., 1992). In this section, I discuss how the group
processes among students who are participating in the group work promote professional
development. These forms of group processes include sharing personal experiences, learning
how to deal with conflicts, and verbal and nonverbal communication.

Sharing of personal experiences. Students learn to construct their own knowledge using
both subjective and objective methods. For example, students begin questioning their values and
beliefs as they learn discipline-specific knowledge. As students begin relating the knowledge to
themselves, they then integrate their personal life into their professional life (Belenky, Clinchy,
Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In her study of college age women, Dunn (1993) summarized
women’s cognitive development in relation to personal experience and the transformation of
learning with this quote:

In the development of full contextual thinking, students first realize that they can share
common experiences, that their individual experiences do relate to each other. Secondly,
they discover that one’s own perspective, while valid, is just that, a perspective. The
student, thinking contextually, sees herself and the teacher as a knower and a meaning
maker. Knowledge is seen as neither an exterior product to be ingested, as in dualism (the
perspective of received knowledge), nor as a set of personal opinions, as in multiplism
(the perspective of subjective knowledge), but as an evolving construct, created by the
self through the analysis of a complex and changing reality (p. 43).

Creedy and colleagues (1992) support Dunn’s work on cognitive development in women.
In their study of problem-based learning in nursing education, Creedy and colleagues propose
that teachers empower students by valuing their contributions, encouraging expression of their
opinions, and permitting students to share personal stories. Teachers also empower students by
allowing them to make mistakes without being demeaned. This allows students to take a risk of
being vulnerable in the classroom. Teachers design teaching strategies to help students develop
skills that enhance sensitivity to the feelings of others and share personal experience. (Fisher,
1993; Schniedewind, 1993). For example, journal writing is one type of teaching strategy, which
develops the skill of sharing personal experiences through a written mode of communication, especially for the silent student (Parry, 1996). It also becomes a means through which students explore the relationships between personal experience and theory.

Palmer (1998) structures his classroom to provide a teaching and learning space that encourages the voice of the individual and the voice of the group. He believes that students need a learning space that provides solitude, in order for the students’ inner selves to be respected and not violated. Learning takes place in a climate where they can air unfamiliar ideas, test ideas, challenge biases, and expand knowledge. By permitting conflict to occur, students learn from each other and expand their understanding of the world.

In Tinto’s (1997) research, he found certain course activities, such as working in groups, encourage students to connect their personal experiences to class content. His study indicated “participating in a collaborative or shared learning group enables students to develop a network of support—a small supportive community of peer—that helps bond students to the broader social communities of the university” (p. 613). Students who put more effort into shared learning experiences help to develop a community in the classroom. The community support found within the classroom serves to encourage students to participate actively, continue attendance, make friends, and learn simultaneously.

Each individual brings a unique perspective to the classroom. As members talk and share their experiences, knowledge is created. This knowledge is then reflected upon, assessed and finally recreated (Nowell, 1996). Students listen to each other and reflect upon what they say. They change their individual views and attitudes. The sharing of personal stories helps in the development of relational patterns in a classroom. For example, taking turns, listening carefully, speaking appropriately, and learning tolerance and respect for each other are outcomes of sharing
personal experiences. This allows teachers and students an opportunity to learn who the students are. With this knowledge, teachers can recognize and affirm student differences. Students then feel empowered and connected with the subject content, with other students, and with teachers (MacDermid et al., 1992; Schniedewind, 1993).

Jacobs and Liola (1991) described an interrelationship between cooperative learning and feminist pedagogy. Both cooperative learning and feminist pedagogy contained “four interconnected strands: horizontal rather than vertical classroom structure; inclusion of the subjective not objective; the importance of context; and a need to overcome the oppression that females face” (p.1). These authors concluded cooperative group learning seems better suited to female learning styles than traditional learning strategies (Beck, 1995).

As students share their personal experiences, their image of themselves as professionals expands. Students learn more about themselves and others when sharing occurs. They gain knowledge of others’ life experiences, which influences their professional performance. Students’ professional development is promoted when they share personal experiences about themselves, their families, and how they handled situations.

**Conflict resolution.** Besides sharing personal experiences, other forms of communication, such as giving feedback and learning how to deal with conflict, are also important in student relationships within groups. According to Schniedewind (1993), students are asked to begin the process of conflict resolution by owning their feelings and saying “I feel” rather than “we feel” or “women feel” so as not to generalize for the group. Through this process, feedback is given to help, not hurt. Feedback becomes constructive, not destructive to a student’s self-esteem. Descriptive feedback rather than evaluative feedback focuses on behavior, not the person. Feedback, which is specific rather than general, helps students focus on areas of weakness.
Conflict in the classroom occurs if the learning space allows for disruptive communication (Schniedewind, 1993). Conflict, when dealt with constructively, is a very creative force in a group. Strategies to deal with conflict can be employed if there are conflicts that arise from course content and classroom interactions. The point of conflict resolution is not for students to agree, but for them to engage in dialogue rather than becoming locked in opposite positions. Thus, new perspectives are generated from which creative ideas occur.

To be able to resolve conflict is a crucial skill for a professional nurse to have while collaborating with other members of the health care team and families. When students are able to resolve conflicts while working in groups, their professional development is promoted.

**Verbal/Nonverbal communication.** Palmer (1998) believes teaching and learning spaces should accommodate both silence and speech. Silence gives students a chance to reflect on what they have said and heard. Palmer believes that silence emerges from the deepest parts of ourselves, of others, and of the world. He asserts, “In authentic education, silence is treated as a trustworthy matrix for the inner work students must do, a medium for learning of the deepest sort” (p. 77).

Nonverbal communication often gives teachers data regarding attitudes of students in a large class. Teachers learn about students through their nonverbal cues (Billson & Tiberius, 1991; Fassinger, 1995). Eye contact, smiling, vocal expressiveness, physical proximity, gesturing, and body language communicate feelings of warmth and support, or the opposite. Failure to attend to nonverbal cues hampers teachers from perceiving what dynamics play out in a classroom.

Even physical proximity of teachers to students communicates something to students. Having chairs in a circle so everyone makes eye contact can promote a feeling of connection or a
sense of surveillance. Walking up and down the aisle helps teachers feel less detached from students and more involved in students’ learning (MacDermid et al., 1992).

In order to care for clients in different settings, students must be able to identify nonverbal cues—the clients and their own as well. Understanding their own nonverbal behavior enhances their ability to understand others’ nonverbal behavior. Working in groups allows the students the space to become aware of their own behavior. In doing so, their professional performance outside the classroom is enhanced.

**Summary**

Nursing programs continue to use Tyler’s model of learning as a means to socialize students into the professional world of nursing. With changes in the health care industry, nurse educators are facing the challenge of developing students professionally and using a classroom as the starting point of this socialization process.

Tinto (1997) recognizes “the college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of institutions of higher education; the educational encounters that occur therein are a major feature of (a) student educational experience” (p. 599). Tinto believes if academic and social integration are to occur, the classroom is a place for these two worlds to intersect. There is growing recognition that student learning is enhanced when students are actively involved in learning, and when they are placed in situations in which they have to share learning in some positive, connected manner (Schniedewind, 1993; Tinto, 1997).

Research links cooperative group learning and students’ desire to remain in institutions of higher education (Stage et al., 1998; Tinto, 1997). In cooperative group learning, which differs from Tyler’s model of learning, student relationships become the focus of the learning experience. In Tyler’s model, the focus is on the learning experience, not students. With
cooperative group learning, the role of teacher is facilitator and guide, not controller. Stage and her colleagues (1998) recommend additional research is needed to explore students’ constructions of knowledge resulting from cooperative group learning. Nursing educators agree with Stage and her colleagues in their belief that understanding how students learn from each other is important (Billings & Halstead, 1998; Heliker, 1994).

The process of students’ professional development begins in a classroom with teachers and students and between students. Cooperative group learning experiences promote professional behaviors required to work in a variety of health care settings. However, nursing researchers primarily focus on clinical practice issues and fail to look at the classroom where professional socialization is first addressed. There is a gap in nursing literature of studies, which focus on exploring knowledge development and professional socialization in nursing education programs.

In the next chapter, I discuss methods used to collect and analyze data. Included are the findings of a pilot study conducted before this research. Institutional Review Board requirements are discussed as part of the ethical concerns for students who participated in this study.
Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter, I discuss the methods guiding me in this study. First, I discuss a previous pilot study that inspired me to explore the phenomenon of relationships among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment. Next, I discuss methodological elements structuring this qualitative grounded theory research. These elements include sample and setting selection, ethical concerns, collecting, and analyzing raw data using a case study approach.

Pilot Study

As I reflect on my journey toward this research, I realize this research process began four years ago when my interest in classroom communities inspired me to explore two nursing programs using a case study approach. The purpose of this pilot study was twofold: (1) explore if teachers and students perceived that a community existed in the classroom and (2) gain expertise in the practice of research. I defined classroom community as a sense of belonging in the classroom.

In 1997, I decided to use Yin’s (1994) case study approach to study two Associate Degree Nursing programs. Case Study A was a university with an open admission policy. Case Study B was a private teaching university requiring specific criteria before admission.

There were two research questions for this pilot study. First, what components are present in a classroom setting that contribute to an individual’s sense of belonging? To answer this question, the following sources of data were analyzed: teacher and student interactions during lecture, classroom physical layout, and methods of teaching.
The second research question was: How did participants in the classroom perceive a feeling of community in the classroom? To answer this question, the use of a Likert scale survey with ten statements and three open-ended questions was administered. A Chi-square statistical analysis was done on the ten statements, and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative analysis was used on three open-ended questions and interviews (See Appendix A). The data collected explored the social environment of the classroom and interaction patterns of participants in this traditional classroom.

Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, multiple themes emerged. Specifically, I found the classroom community had the following elements: emotional, relational, communicative, group activity, and aspects of the socialization process for the individual. Participants defined aspects of the classroom, which detracted from community, such as the relationship between teachers and students, inappropriate communication between teachers and students and among students, judgmental attitudes among participants, and pedagogical approach.

Each statement in the survey instrument was statistically analyzed using Chi-square. Sixty-two responses were returned from the two schools of nursing. Overall, students perceived there was a shared goal between teachers and students. They also perceived a strong sense of connectedness and trust with their fellow students. However, 32% percent did not have a strong sense of connectedness and trust with teachers in the class. Approximately 43% perceived the classroom as a safe place from teasing, humiliation, and rejection. Eighty-six percent perceived participants in the classroom accepted them, despite their cultural background. Ninety-six percent answered they could share their learning experience with other participants in the classroom.
In the overall Chi-square analysis, ages of the students influenced their perceptions of the classroom environment. Students in age groups 30-40 and 40-44 experienced difficulty adjusting to the classroom environment in Case Study A, whereas age groups 25-29 and 35-39 experienced difficulty adjusting to the classroom environment in Case Study B. Case Study A was housed in a public university with an open admission policy and admitted older students. The mean age for students in Case Study A was 38.5. Case Study B was housed in a private university that required specific criteria. The mean age of the students was 31.6.

Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, one thing I learned in Case Study A was participants suggested mutual respect between teachers and students important to the definition of community in the classroom. Yet, students perceived teachers as not being part of the whole experience of community and not displaying respect for students. However, the Chi-square frequency did not support this. The findings from the Chi-square statistical test suggested teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the emotional, relationship, and communication of the classroom community was positive.

Also in Case Study A, the theme, which emerged in the communication category related to communication in the classroom, was similar to feuding in a family setting. There was a discrepancy between how students responded on the survey and what I heard from the students I interviewed.

In Case Study B, responses on the survey suggested a strong sense of connectedness and trust between a teacher and students. Students also perceived mutual liking and acceptance between teacher and student, despite cultural background and performance, and openness for communication. Yet, the theme that emerged in the communication category suggested several students did not believe they fit in; they did not have a sense of belonging. These students’
comments acknowledged they did not feel equal to the others in the classroom. Feelings of inequality can affect students’ professional development and ability to work collaboratively with other health care members. Comments made by students in the open-ended questions suggested teachers had their favorites, and cliques formed among the students. These discrepancies in results show the importance of triangulating data from multiple sources to understand a phenomenon.

At this point, I returned to the literature and focused on three themes emerging from the pilot study. The three themes that emerged as distracting students in the classroom related to relationships between teachers and students, relationships between students and students, and pedagogical approach. Based on these findings, I chose to explore social interactions of students in the classroom. Further, I wanted to explore how these interactions influence their course content learning and professional development.

To establish a beginning point in this research, I make several assumptions about relational dynamics in classrooms, which take place under the veil of “teaching and learning.” First, I believe students bring their sense of self into the classroom. Their values, beliefs, and positions in society influence how they relate in a social setting. Second, I believe social interactions take place among students in a classroom setting. Last, I believe teaching strategies promote learning depending on the style of presentation and the type of strategy.

Rationale for Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment. The following two research questions are designed to explore this phenomenon: In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their
course content learning? In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development? To answer these questions, I chose a case study approach.

**Case Study Research Design**

Case studies are done to shed light on a phenomenon over time and to analyze a phenomenon holistically (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Yin, 1994). According to Yin, “a case study design is an important research methodology when the researcher has little or no control over the events and when the phenomenon is situated within a real-life context” (p. 1). For this study, there were five groups of students. Each group of students was considered a case study. Within the contexts of the social interactions of students who were placed in groups, I explored how cooperative group learning influenced students’ course content learning and their professional development.

Data collected as student interviews, student journals, and observations formed the case study database. After analysis, a narrative report was written to provide readers with a thick description of each group. The second level of analysis involved developing some form of categorization or characteristics to interpret the meaning of the data. Defining characteristics of students’ perceptions of how the group processes influenced their learning of the objectives of the course were placed in a table grid format within the context of each case study. This type of inquiry required inductive reasoning throughout the process. The final product was an analytical case study for each group of students. After each case was analyzed, a cross case analysis was done between each case. Both independent and dependent variables were analyzed between the five cases. Themes of how students perceived they learned the course objectives through the group activity assigned were compared and contrasted between each case study.
Grounded Theory

Qualitative research seeks to understand and explain a phenomenon. Patton (1990) views grounded theory as a methodological approach used to generate new theories or test existing theories. Grounded theorists seek to understand the nature of reality regarding the phenomenon being studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this study, social interactions among students in a cooperative group learning environment and how they attach meaning to situations are explored. These meanings become the basis for actions and interactions in a classroom setting, in terms of course content learning and professional development.

Social and structural processes, which occur in social settings, are the focus in grounded theory studies (Burns & Groves, 1997; Polit & Hungler, 1997). In social life, groups share meanings. Interviewing students helped me to understand the structure of the social interactions between students working in groups. Because of its theoretical importance, interactions of students in a social setting, such as found in a classroom setting, are the focus of observation in this grounded theory research.

In this grounded theory study, I tested the existing theory of cooperative group learning by collecting data while simultaneously searching for theoretical constructs, themes, and patterns. These constructs, themes, and patterns are grounded in the theory because they are “grounded” (p.10) in the real world. This inductive approach began with individual experiences of students in their assigned groups within the classroom.

Description of Setting

Each case study is housed within the same city, university, and classroom. These descriptions are common to all five case studies explored in this study. Therefore, the descriptions are not repeated before discussing the findings of each case study. The university
used in this study is found in southwest Louisiana in a city of approximately 85,000 people and services students within a 100-mile radius. The Baccalaureate Nursing program is housed in a newly constructed building on campus. According to the University Registrar’s Office, the College of Nursing maintained 602 undergraduates enrolled in the Fall 2000 semester. Of these 602 students, 437 were Baccalaureate nursing students. Seventy-nine of these 437 were male; three hundred fifty-eight were female.

Sample selection

Purposeful sampling best fits the nature of this study. A two-step method of selecting students to participate in this study was necessary. One criterion for selection was students must meet upper division criteria. According to the University Catalog (2000-2001), the nursing major consists of sixty-six hours. Students in lower division must complete four semesters of prerequisites before they can apply to upper division. Upper division consists of the core requirements for the nursing curriculum. Students are admitted to upper division after they have completed an application process, which determines they have met the criteria established by the College of Nursing. Admission to upper division implies to students they are beginning the socialization process into the world of professional nursing. The second criterion for selection was students must be enrolled in a class that uses cooperative group learning as a teaching method. The nursing class chosen was a second semester junior level course taught in the upper division.

The next step in the sampling process was to find out which group the teachers assigned the students. This sampling process was purposeful. The two teachers divided thirty-four students into five groups. See Table 3.1 for the composition of group members.
Table 3.1
Composition of Group Members
Based on Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Survivors</td>
<td>20-57</td>
<td>5-Females 1-Male</td>
<td>6-Caucasians</td>
<td>1 Female student had an Associate Degree in Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Laughers</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>6-Females 1-Male</td>
<td>6-Caucasians</td>
<td>1 African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Culturally Sensitive</td>
<td>20-26</td>
<td>5-Females 2-Male</td>
<td>5-Caucasians</td>
<td>2 African-Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Serious-Minded</td>
<td>20-47</td>
<td>5-Females 2-Males</td>
<td>6-Caucasians</td>
<td>1 African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commuters</td>
<td>21-33</td>
<td>5-Females 2-Males</td>
<td>5-Caucasian 1-African-American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table illustrates the composition of the groups based on age, gender, and ethnicity.

There were five groups of students resulting in five case studies. Findings were compared and contrasted from one case study to the next. This sampling logic best fits Yin’s (1994) multiple-case replication design. “The replication logic is analogous to that used in multiple experiments... If similar results are obtained from all (five) cases, replication is said to have taken place” (Yin, 1994, p. 45). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) agreed with Yin’s concept of replication logic.

Classroom environment

Many classrooms in the newly constructed building are designed for traditional methods of instruction. For example, on the first floor, the two classrooms are tiered with the teacher
lecturing from a podium in the center of the classroom. Students sit behind long, unmovable tables. The next set of classrooms is on the third floor where this study took place. This classroom is used throughout the day by various teachers and for various classes. Sometimes the students are in the same classroom up to six hours a day.

The desks had attached writing tops that could adjust to hold the body size of the student. Desks were lined up vertically. There were two empty chairs lined against the south wall and one empty chair lined against the north wall. The room had no tables. A podium was centered in the front of the room. An erasable blackboard was on the west wall behind the podium. Next to the podium sat an overhead projector. A television with a VCR was positioned in the northwest corner of the room.

**Description of course**

Nursing courses in upper division are designed to begin the process of socialization. This second semester junior level course employed cooperative group learning as a teaching method. Several nursing courses during the Spring semester employed cooperative group learning. According to the course description found in the syllabus, the purpose of this course was to:

...provide basic community health theory within the vast scope of community health nursing. Students are provided opportunities to relate the philosophy, concepts and methods of community health to nursing practice. Knowledge and principles of community health are incorporated into the nursing process with individuals, families, and groups. The roles of the community health nurse are explored in a variety of community settings...(p.1).

The objectives of the course served as the probes used during the interviews. These objectives were divided into course content and professional development. Group activities were designed to help the students meet the objectives of the course. One major task assigned to
students was the implementation of a health promotion activity, a teaching plan, to single teenage
mothers in the community.

Description of objectives

Based on the National League for Nursing’s criteria, each course must determine which
objectives focus on the major concepts and sub-concepts found in the curriculum. These
concepts include “man”, “health”, “nursing”, “environment”, and “teaching-learning” (NLN
Self-Study Report, 1996). Under the concept of nursing, sub-concepts include skills, functions,
and roles. Teachers of the course identified the objectives as they related to the concepts found
in the curriculum. For the purpose of this study, I divided the objectives into course content and
professional development. Five objectives addressed concepts of health, man, nursing skills and
functions, and environment. These five objectives were designed to achieve the theoretical
component of the course content. Three objectives addressed nursing roles, which were designed
to help the student develop professionally. At the beginning of the course, the teacher gave
students and me a course outline that included the topics to be discussed at each class meeting.
Before each class, the teacher would explain to me the type of group activity she planned, the
topic to be discussed, and the corresponding course objective she was meeting for the day.

Now, I will discuss the goals of these objectives and the group activities used as teaching
strategies to achieve these objectives.

Objective # 1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication
from borrowed theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals,
families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health (Major concepts:
Health, Nursing, Environment; Sub-concepts: Influencing Factors, Nursing Skills, Nursing
Functions, Well-Illness continuum).
The purpose of this objective was to help students gain knowledge of community health theories by understanding how cultural values and belief patterns of communication affect the concept of health among individuals, families, and groups. The instructor used two types of teaching strategies in her attempt to achieve this objective. She instructed the students to develop a gumbo recipe while working in their groups. After completing the assignment, she asked each group to contribute how they would make a gumbo. Once the ingredients were written on the blackboard, the teacher then lectured to the students on how theories are composed of concepts and the relationships between the concepts. She used the ingredients to make a gumbo as the analogy between concepts and theory development.

Objective # 2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community (Major concepts: Man, Environment; Sub-concepts: Biological, Psychological, Spiritual, Influencing Factors).

The purpose of this objective was to help students gain knowledge of how stressful situations affect the needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community depending on developmental stages. Using worksheets with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house, the teacher instructed students to role-play how they would intervene in this situation as a community health nurse. Each group had to decide on an intervention to be used with this family and then role-play it in front of the class.

Objective # 3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community (Major concepts: Nursing; Sub-concepts: Nursing Process, Nursing Skills, Nursing Function).

The purpose of this objective was to help students enhance their critical thinking skills by using the nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills. The teacher
assigned each group different scenarios from a worksheet. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process while working in their groups. Being able to develop a care plan using the nursing process demonstrated communication skills and the ability to think independently.

**Objective # 4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community (Major concepts: Nursing; Sub-concepts: Nursing Skills, Nursing Functions).**

The purpose of this objective was to enhance students’ critical thinking skills by utilizing the nursing process. The second purpose was to help the students gain an awareness of their accountability for nursing decisions. The instructor gave each student an individual assignment to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Although the assignments were individual, each group member was encouraged to work together as a group to develop their teaching plans. The group members were also required to attend the program for the unwed teenage mothers to provide support, encouragement, and feedback for the group members presenting. Another teaching strategy used to achieve this objective was a worksheet with scenarios. Students were required to develop a nursing care plan based on the scenarios using critical thinking skills.

**Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice (Major concepts: Nursing; Sub-concept: Nursing Functions).**

The purpose of this objective was to help students gain knowledge of using the research process in critiquing articles with epidemiological information. They were to critique the articles, understand the epidemiological information, and apply it to a situation. The teacher used handouts with different scenarios. For example, one group had to compare the rates of sexually
transmitted diseases between two states by using epidemiological tables. Another group had to use the information on morbidity and mortality tables in order to develop a care plan for college age students who are at high risk for excessive drinking.

Next, I will discuss the goal of the following objectives, which address professional development, and the group activities used as teaching strategies to achieve these objectives.

Objective # 6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system (Major concept: Nursing; Sub-concept: Roles).

The purpose of this objective was to help students understand the professional role of the community health nurse in relation to the United States health care delivery system. Unlike the other objectives, both teachers participated in this objective. During one class, one teacher gave a handout with a list of public health organizations, dates when the organizations were formed, positions, and individuals who held these positions in the United States health care delivery system. During the second class, the second teacher gave a different newspaper to each group. The teacher instructed the students to find a public health issue either at a local, state, or national level. Each group had to report their findings to the rest of the class.

Objective # 7: Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in the community (Major concept: Nursing; Sub-concept; Nursing Skills, Nursing Functions, Nursing Roles).

The purpose of this objective was to help students gain an awareness of the professional role of the community health nurse and how this role impacts on them as professional nurses. Students were given individual assignments to implement the teaching plan they developed for unwed teenage mothers. Through their implementation, they were acting in the professional role
of a community health nurse. At other times, the teacher gave students scenarios for the group members to develop nursing care plans based on their knowledge of the roles of a community health nurse.

Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community-based settings (Major concept: Nursing; Sub-concept: Roles).

The purpose of this objective was to help students gain an awareness of the professional role of the community health nurse in a variety of settings. Again, implementing their teaching plans gave the students’ an understanding of the importance of the role of a community health educator in a community-based setting. The teacher also had professional nurses as guest speakers periodically throughout the semester. The goal was to help students understand the different roles of nurses in community-based settings.

Group Activities

Group activities were designed by the two teachers to meet the course objectives. In Table 3.2, the course objectives and group activities are displayed.

Classroom participants

The class roll showed thirty-five students had signed up for this class. After late registration closed, the final number was thirty-four. Of these thirty-four students, thirty-two students signed the informed consent agreeing to participate in the study. Thirty-one students completed the study by being interviewed.

The teacher established guidelines of how the class would be structured, using a modified version of “Learning Together”. She informed the students that she had selected them to be in groups. Due to the number of students, four groups had seven students and one group had six students. The teacher told me she divided each group to include one male and one Black person.
Although randomly selected, the teacher did attempt to diversify the group through gender and ethnic background. All Black students were females. However, after the final class attendance record was obtained, the teacher informed me one group did not have a Black female and one group had two Black females.

### Table 3.2

**Course Objectives With Corresponding Group Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives</th>
<th>Group Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 1</td>
<td>Gumbo recipe activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 2</td>
<td>Dirty house scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 3</td>
<td>Worksheets with different scenarios. Students had to develop care plans using nursing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 4</td>
<td>Teaching plan; worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 5</td>
<td>Article had vital statistics; Students had to critique and analyze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 6</td>
<td>Newspaper article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 7</td>
<td>Teaching plan; worksheets with scenarios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective # 8</td>
<td>Teaching plan; guest speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table illustrates course objectives and corresponding activities used to achieve objectives.

The teacher handed out name cards of different colors. There were salmon, red, blue, white, and green color name cards. Students moved to the group with the same color name card. The teacher informed students within each group there would be one student designated as a group leader. This assigned person would be responsible for guiding the remaining students in completing assigned tasks. Due to the large enrollment, the teacher could not follow Kagan’s (1990) recommendation of forming a group size to include 4-6 members. One group had six students; the remaining groups had seven students.
Ethical concerns

Before discussing procedures for data collecting and analysis, ethical issues need to be considered. Students participating in this study were asked to sign the informed consent (See Appendix B). In this informed consent, students acknowledged they understood the nature of the study, their voluntary responsibility of maintaining a log, the confidentiality of data collected. Further, the students gave permission to view their student records for final course grades. Confidentiality of data collected was maintained by coding information as it pertains to each case study. This ensured students’ identities were not linked to their individual responses. Students were free to drop out of the study anytime during the semester.

Throughout the study, students’ identities were disguised through a coding process. The codes were locked in my filing cabinet in my home to prevent access from students or teachers. Each group was assigned a metaphorical name, such as “The Survivors”. Students were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Institutional Review Boards from both Louisiana State University and the university selected for the setting of this study reviewed the case study protocol to ensure the requirements of ethical research were met.

Research Questions and Data Collecting Protocol

In this section, I discuss methods of inquiry associated with each research question. The methods of inquiry include student journals, interviews with students, observations of students’ classroom experiences, and final course grades of each student within each group. The first research question is: In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning? Sources of data included observations, open-ended interviews with students, student journals, and final exam grades. Open-ended interviews were done at the completion of the observation of the groups.
The second research question is: In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development? Sources of data included observations, open-ended interviews with students, and student journals.

In Table 3.3, I include the sequence of when the data were collected.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence of Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Groups A - E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Student journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Groups A - E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.  Final exams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table illustrates a time line, or sequencing, of when data was collected.

Student Journals

Journal writing is one strategy that develops the skill of sharing personal experiences through a written mode of communication, especially for silent students (Parry, 1996). Students were asked to make daily entries of their experiences in the classroom during the group activities. (See Appendix C for guidelines on student journals). The student journal guidelines included the following instructions: (1) Within the members of your group, rate each according to whether they helped you grow professionally. Use the numbers 4,3,2,1,0—4 meaning you have grown professionally because of your interactions with him/her, 0, you have not grown professionally because of your interactions with him/her, and the other numbers representing intermediate degrees of growing professionally because of your interactions with him/her. (2)
Use the same ranking method and rate the members of your group according to whether they helped you learn the course content. From these instructions, a sociogram grid was developed depicting which students helped their group members grow professionally, and which students helped their group members learn the course content. From these data, network analyses (Moreno, 1934/1953) were conducted to ascertain students’ choices using Kerlinger’s (1986) formulas on sociometric indices.

Students were not consistent with turning in their journals. Students commented their course loads were intense and time consuming, and they did not have time to complete the journals in a timely manner. Although journal entries were used as part of data triangulation, information gained from journals was limited and did not include all students in each group.

Network Analyses

Sociometry is a form of gathering and measuring students’ choices regarding relationships within the groups (Glanzer & Glaser, 1959). Sociometry was first developed by Moreno (1934/1953). Currently the field is known as network analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). According to Kerlinger (1986), “It has also been called a means of studying the attractions and repulsions of members of groups” (p. 499). I will discuss each form of network analysis used to determine whether or not students interacted with each other.

Sociometric Matrix. Based on students’ choices, a sociometric matrix was developed using number ‘1’ for those students who were ranked either four or three, and ‘0’ for those students who were ranked two, one, zero, or not ranked at all by other students. These sociometric matrices expressed all the choices of group members in the group. There are three types of choices, according to Kerlinger (1986). One type of choice is the simple one-way choice where student A chooses student B, but student B does not choose student A. The second type of
choice is the mutual choice where students A and B choose each other mutually. A ‘no choice’ is when student A is not chosen by other group members. The sums at the bottom of the sociometric matrix indicated the number of choices each individual received, or their social receptivity. Based on the sums, one can infer which students helped other students learn the course content and which students promoted professional development. These findings were reported in a table grid format within the case study findings chapter.

**Sociograms or directed graphs.** Sociograms, or directed graphs, are a mathematical term used to depict the type of student interactions occurring during their group activities. From the graph, one can infer who is the informal leader of the group, who is most liked by the group members, and who influenced the group members. When three or more students mutually choose each other, then Kerlinger (1986) describes this relationship as a clique. Using a sociogram allows the reader to visualize the direction of interactions found among the students in the group.

**Sociometric Indices.** Analyses of the choice status of the group member and group cohesiveness were done on the group. The choice status indicates how well or how poorly individuals were chosen by the group members. Glanzer and Glaser (1959) describe the choice status as a mathematical technique, which can be applied to relationships, such as “interacts with” (p.318). Using the number of times an individual was chosen in the sociomatrix choice matrix divided by the number of individuals in the group will determine the choice status of the group members. Kerlingers’s (1986) choice status formula is:

\[
CSj = \frac{3cj}{n-1}
\]
Where CSj equals the choice status of the Person j; 3cj equals the sum of choices in the column j; and n-1 equals the number of individuals in the group minus the individual (Kerlinger, 1986, p.502).

To determine the group cohesiveness of the group, the following formula was used:

\[ Co = \frac{3(I \leftrightarrow J)}{dn/2} \]

Where Co equals group cohesiveness and 3(I \leftrightarrow J) equals the sum of mutual choices, or mutual pairs; and d equals the number of choices each individual is permitted (Kerlinger, 1986, p.502). Group cohesiveness scores can be reported as high, moderate, or low. A high group cohesiveness score ranges from .50 or greater. A moderate group cohesiveness score ranges from .30 to .49. A low group cohesiveness score ranges from .10 to .29.

Sociometric indices were single numbers taken from the sociometric data involving two or more numbers. This single number indicates the number of times a student was chosen, or was the most preferred. These characteristics of individuals and groups related to their social interaction patterns.

Observations

Patton (1990) believed the purpose of observation is to describe a setting and activities that take place in the setting. Direct observations are used to study the physical aspects of the classroom and the social interactions of the students in their groups. I observed interactions among the students while working in groups at least one time during the semester. In two groups, members had frequent absenteeism from class. I observed these groups once during the semester. While these observations did not yield concrete data that can be used in this research,
they helped me understand the context of the group. Further, the observations and interviews suggested metaphors that characterized each group.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe observational techniques are the least intrusive method of research. Observational method lends itself to researcher creativity. Denzin and Lincoln state,

Instead of working with predetermined categories, observers construct theories that generate categories and posit the linkages among them. At any point in the process, observers are free to alter the problems and questions they are pursuing as they gain greater knowledge of their subjects. Compared with more structured methods, then, observation has the flexibility to yield insight into new realities or new ways of looking at old realities (p. 382).

Observation, when combined with other methods, is valuable as a source of data triangulation (See Appendix D for observation protocol). Although the observations did not yield concrete data, I was able to watch students as they interacted with each other. Their interactions gave me an insight to their personalities, which helped when I interviewed them. While interviewing students, I was able to use my observational notes to ask questions related to their interactions, in order to seek clarification.

Interviews

The student was provided a copy of the interview questions during the interview. As part of the data collection, an open-ended interview began mid-semester with all interviews completed by the end of the semester (See Appendix E for interview protocol). Responses by each student of a group were tape recorded and transcribed. Tape recording decreases research bias by reducing the tendency to make an unconscious selection of data, which favors the researcher’s biases (Gall et al., 1996). However, tape recording may inhibit participants from expressing freely their views if they know they are being recorded. I explained the purpose of the
taping and ensured all tapes were kept away from the classroom setting. Tapes were placed in a file cabinet in my home. Participants were also given the choice of remaining in the study. Interviews were done in a conference room–away from the classroom. This helped to ensure confidentiality of participants. Tapes were coded according to code numbers assigned to each group. For example, a student in Group 1 was coded as 1-Grp1, the second student was coded as 2-Grp1, etc. Students were given the typed transcribed copy of their interview. Most of the students gave the copy back without comments. Some students made changes on the copy and then returned the copy to me. The changes were correcting family members names or correcting the wording of their statements. There were no changes made regarding the context of the interview. All the students who read their interviews expressed that the interviews were transcribed accurately.

**Final Course Grades**

Final course grades were based on a teaching plan, four test scores, one final exam, development of a referral system, and critiques of articles. Students’ scores in each group were computed to obtain the final numerical grade. Each group score was then computed by dividing students total numerical grade by number of students who participated in the study. These mean scores of each group were used as part of data triangulation to ascertain how student interactions influenced their learning of course content in the cross case analysis.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Data were analyzed using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method. Data obtained from student interviews and student journals were used to triangulate data with student interviews. Once the data for each group were analyzed, a cross-case analysis was done to compare and contrast themes emerging from each group.
Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the primary measurement for the standard of inference quality in qualitative research. There are four criteria used collectively to establish trustworthiness. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose “certain technological techniques...to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. A thick description assures transferability. Auditing is used to establish dependability and confirmability” (p. 219). Below I describe how I guaranteed trustworthiness in this study.

Credibility. In order to ensure credibility of a study, the findings must be believable to an audience (Leininger, 1994). These findings reflected actual experiences of participants as interpreted by this researcher. Participants were asked to engage in the research process initially and throughout the semester. Using an interview protocol, I interviewed thirty-one students. I returned a copy of their transcribed interview, the students read the copy, and returned the copy to me with comments or feedback. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) refer to this process as member checking.

Persistent observation is another technique used to establish credibility. Persistent observation, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), “is to provide depth for researchers by helping them to identify the characteristics or aspects of the social scene that are the most relevant to the particular questions being pursued” (p.90). Using an observation protocol, I observed three groups of students twice during the fifteen-week semester. Due to frequent absenteeism of group members, I observed two groups only once during the semester. I was
unable to ensure persistent observation of the groups due to excessive absenteeism. After completion of the observation of a group, I began scheduling interviews.

Triangulation occurs in four different ways: data triangulation, researcher triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Yin (1994) claims triangulation of data functions as a form of construct validity for the study. Multiple sources of evidence used during the triangulation process provided multiple measures of the same phenomenon. This helps to check the validity of case study findings (Gall et al., 1996). In this study, I employed data triangulation from several sources to help view how student interactions influenced student learning and professional development. I, also, employed methodological triangulation using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitatively, I used Lincoln and Guba’s constant comparative method to analyze observations and students’ interviews. Quantitatively, I computed sociometric matrixes from the students’ journals to ascertain student relationships in the group and computed the means of the final numerical course grades for each group. Using both methods allowed me to explore the phenomenon of course content learning and professional development from multiple perspectives.

Transferability. Transferability occurs when findings from the study are transferred or applied to another similar situation (Leininger, 1994). This criterion focuses on general similarities of findings under similar environmental conditions, contexts, or circumstances. Again, the criterion fits Yin’s (1994) replication of logic. If results are similar in all five cases, then replication has taken place. A thick description is required to meet the criteria of transferability. Denzin (1989) describes thick description:

A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and
self-knowings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the persons or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (p. 83).

In this research, students described how they functioned in their groups. They also attached the meanings and intentions of their actions while functioning in their groups. Themes emerged from students’ interviews adding depth to the phenomenon being explored. While creating the thick description, I looked for constructs that brought order to the descriptive data collected in the interviews. Transferability was achieved when common themes emerged from the five case studies. These themes emerged from students who were in similar environments and all experiencing the same group activity on the same day.

Confirmability/Dependability. The next criterion of inference quality is confirmability and dependability. In this criterion, the research process and alterations to the research design must be evaluated for appropriateness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure both confirmability and dependability, an audit trail is necessary.

As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an external auditor analyzed data in this study. She read the findings providing feedback throughout the process. The auditor examined data and findings to validate conclusions were reasonable and logical. The external auditor has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction, and holds an Assistant Professor’s ranking at a university in a southern state where the research was held.

Dependability was accomplished by successfully overlapping all tools used in the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 1994). Interviews and observations were included in the database. Students’ journals, sociometric matrixes, and final
course grades overlapped the database. These tools were used to support or explain the phenomenon being explored.

**Constant Comparative Method**

Sources of data were analyzed for content using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method. Interviews and observations were typed and placed on a database file on the computer. A file for each objective was established. Students’ interviews were extracted from the original interview and pasted into the file of the corresponding objective. At the completion, each objective file had all the students’ interviews for the specific objective. This step was done for each group.

A code was assigned to each line of the text in the database containing the interviews related to the objective. Using the Sort function on Corel Word Perfect, the text was broken down into meaningful segments. A segment, also called an analysis unit, is a section of text, which contains one item of information. A segment can be any length. This analysis unit must have two characteristics. The first characteristic is that the segment is aimed at understanding what the inquirer needs or action the inquirer must take. The second characteristic is the segment must be able to be stand alone and be interpreted without additional information (Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Segments were identified by using the return function to indicate the beginning and the end of the paragraph, or segment (Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The task of unitizing involved triangulating data segments obtained from sources, such as observational notes and interviews. Codes were established for the source, type of respondent, and method of data within the context of each case study. For example, for Group A, coding for interviews would be A-Int and for observations, A-Obs. Again, using the Sort function in Corel Word Perfect, segments were sorted.
A category within each case study was developed (Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A category is a construct or concept, which has been inferred from interpreting data. By developing a set of categories, summarizing data became easier. Significant data that consistently emerged were considered instances of the same concept. The concept then became a category. Categories were divided into subcategories (Gall et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Subcategories represented different degrees or levels of a construct. Subcategories are useful for detecting relational and causal patterns. Subcategories of the group processes were placed in a table grid format. The process of sorting and developing categories continued until all data were reviewed, compared, and categorized. In case study research, categories are derived from the data instead of from theories developed by other researchers. Category construction is consistent with the principles of grounded theory.

Categories were compared to determine whether they overlap, if they were confusing or irrelevant to the study, and whether some categories were of particular importance. Segments were compared within and across categories until theoretical saturation was achieved. Theoretical saturation was achieved when no new or relevant data emerged relevant to established coding categories. Advantages of using Lincoln and Guba’s constant comparative method included the ability to clarify meanings of categories and the ability to recognize distinctions between categories. Another advantage is the ability to decide which categories are most important (Gall et al., 1996).

After the subcategories were placed in a table grid, the next step was to become aware of patterns, or themes, which emerged from the subcategories. Using inductive analysis, themes were identified and discussed.
In the cross-case analysis, a comparison of the sociometric analyses between the five case studies was done and placed in a table grid format. The themes from each group were compared and contrasted using Spradley’s (1979) componential analysis. According to Spradley, a componential analysis is “the systematic search for the attributes (components of meaning) associated with cultural symbols” (p.174). Componential analysis helps the reader understand the attributes as described by the students during the interviews. Spradley believes this is a way the researcher seeks to discover the “psychological reality” of the students’ world (p.175). Another purpose of the componential analysis is to help the researcher understand the “structural reality” of the students’ world (p. 175). These attributes were also placed in a table containing the contrasting data from the five cases. Spradley’s calls this table a paradigm. “A paradigm is a schematic representation of the attributes which distinguish the members of a contrast set” (p.176-177).

In the final chapter, I related this data to other research findings reported in the literature. The remaining chapters present findings of each case study, a cross-case analysis, recommendations for future research, and implications for nursing education.
Chapter 4: “The Survivors”

Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from the group called “The Survivors”. First, I briefly discuss the composition and nature of the group members. I discuss students’ perceptions of their social interactions using Moreno’s (1934/1953) network analysis as an observable measurement of social interactions. Then, I discuss students’ perceptions of how their social interactions enhanced or created barriers to their learning of the course content. Finally, I discuss how students’ social interactions within the group promoted or impeded their professional development.

Composition and Nature of Group Members

“The Survivors” consisted of one male and five female students. Ages ranged from 20 to 57 years. All group members were Caucasian. Jen, a 20-year-old single female, lives on campus. She returns home every weekend, summer, and holidays. Jane, a 21-year-old single female, lives with her parents. Kristen, a 21-year-old single female, lives at home with her parents approximately 75 miles from campus. She has one younger sister and two younger brothers. Mike, a 21-year-old single male, lives in an apartment near campus. His parents live in a nearby state. He attends the university on an academic scholarship. Katie, a 30-year-old married female, lives with her husband, approximately thirty minutes from campus. Anita, a 57-year-old divorced female, lives in an apartment off campus. She graduated from an associate degree nursing program five years ago. Her goal today is to complete the requirements for a baccalaureate degree. Based on the high rate of absenteeism found in this group, I metaphorically named this group “The Survivors”.

55
Social Interactions

Course Content Learning

One way to look at student interactions is to develop a choice matrix. In the choice matrix labeled Table 4.1, I analyzed students’ social interactions by studying who chose whom in relation to which students influenced learning of the course content.

Table 4.1
Sociomatrix from “The Survivors”
With Influence on Course Content Learning
As the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who most helped the group members learn the course content. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their learning of the course content. According to Kerlinger (1986), the total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who helped others learn the course content.

Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Jane and Katie were the top two students who influenced group members learning of the course content.

Another way of analyzing which students influenced the group’s learning of the course content is a sociogram, or directed graph. According to Kerlinger (1986), a directed graph, is a
mathematical term used to describe interactional patterns. In this sociogram, Jane and Katie influenced the group member’s learning of the course content. See Figure 4.1.

![Sociogram of “The Survivors” With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable]

Based on this diagram, there were two cliques. According to Kerlinger (1986), a clique has three or more mutual choices. One clique formed around Jane. In the clique that formed around Jane, there were three mutual choices: Jane and Kristen, Jane and Anita, and Jane and Katie. Another clique formed with Katie as the center. The three mutual choices formed around Katie were Katie and Jane, Katie and Jen, and Katie and Kristen. Students’ learning of the course content centered around these two cliques. Kristen and Jen were part of a mutual pair choice indicating they had some influence on student learning. By being chosen by two students, this indicated Mike had some influence on students’ learning of the course content. Anita had influence on Jane’s learning, but none on the remaining group members.
Another useful tool for analyzing interactional patterns include the choice status of the person in the group. According to Kerlinger (1986), using the number of times a student was selected, the choice status of the members of the group can be computed. See Table 4.2.

### Table 4.2
**Choice Status of “The Survivors”**  
With Influence on Learning as Criterion Variable

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Jane and Katie were chosen more frequently followed by Jen, Kristen, and Mike. Anita was chosen the least by her group members. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interaction patterns in a group. Using the number of mutual pairs, the group cohesiveness was computed. In this group, there were five mutual pairs of choices. Using Kerlinger’s (1986) formula, the group cohesiveness was computed $5/((3\times6)/2) = .56$ indicating a high degree of cohesiveness.

**Professional Development**

In the choice matrix labeled Table 4.3, I analyzed which students promoted professional development based on students’ choices.
Table 4.3
Sociomatrix of “The Survivors”
With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who influenced professional development. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their professional development. The total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who influenced professional development.

Analysis of this sociomatrix indicated Jane was the top student who influenced professional development followed by Katie and Mike. Anita, Jen, and Kristen had the least influence on students’ professional development.

A directed graph depicted the following interactions. See Figure 4.2. In this directed graph, a clique formed around Jane. There were three mutual choices, which centered around Jane: Jane and Kristen, Jane and Katie, and Jane and Anita. Katie was selected as the second top student who influenced professional development with two mutual choices. With two single choices, Mike had an influence on Kristen and Katie’s professional development.
A choice status of each person in the group was computed next in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Choice Status of “The Survivors”
With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>.60</td>
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<td>Kristen</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>.60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Jane was chosen as the one who most influenced professional development, followed by Katie and Mike. Anita, Jen, and Kristen had the least influence on professional development. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

I then computed the group cohesiveness. With four mutual pair choices, the group cohesiveness was computed $4/((3 \times 6)/2) = .44$ indicating a moderate degree of group cohesiveness.
Analysis

While students participated in the group activities, two cliques formed, which influenced students’ learning of the course content. With two cliques forming within the group, this contributed to a high group cohesiveness score. The two cliques formed around Jane and Katie. Jane and Katie had higher choice status scores followed by Jen, Kristen, and Mike. This indicated Jane and Katie were most often chosen, or were the most preferred group members, to help the others learn the course content. Anita was the least preferred group member to help the others learn the course content.

While the group cohesiveness was moderate, one clique formed centering around Jane indicating Jane was the top student who influenced professional development followed by Katie. Jane had the highest choice status score followed by Katie and Mike. Anita, Jen, and Kristen had the lowest choice status scores indicating they influenced professional development the least. Jane was instrumental in helping students learn the course content and promoting professional development. Katie was significant in helping students learn the course content, but not as significant in promoting professional development. Mike was less significant in course content learning, but was significant in promoting professional development. Jen and Kristen had minimal influence on course content learning and the least influence on promoting professional development. Anita was not significant in either the learning of the course content or professional development.

Course Content Learning

In this section, I discuss how students learned the courses content using the course objectives and group activities as guides. I also discuss how students’ interactions impeded their learning of the course content.
Objective # 1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication from borrowed theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals, families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health.

The teacher instructed the students to work in their groups and develop a gumbo recipe. Each group then had to present to the class the ingredients they would have placed in a gumbo. When asked if they met objective 1 through the group activity, five students told me they did not gain knowledge of cultural values and community health theories. One student told me he did. Mike claimed by sharing knowledge, the activity helped him see the bigger picture of theories, cultural values, and community health.

I think it made it easier to learn it. We could explain it easier to each other what we were missing. One person would get one little part of it; another person would get another little part of it and like together, we could fit the pieces of the puzzle together.

The remaining five students indicated they did not gain knowledge of community health theories through the group activity. Yet, they did feel the instructor’s lecture helped bridge the gap between the group activity and the course objective. When asked if she learned about community health theories, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication, Jen said,

Not really. I mean it was a fun class, but it really didn’t because we had theories in other nursing classes. So, it really didn’t help too much cause I knew them and I knew what goes into a theory. But it was a fun class. Mrs. Groves did a good job making that class fun.

Jane agreed, “I really don’t remember learning about that or community health theories. I remember going over them, but I guess it really didn’t influence me that much. The group activity helped me learn about gumbo. I don’t know about theories.” Kristen added, “It did not help me at all. I’m just being honest. I don’t know anything about community health theories.” Katie said, “Well, not much cause I was the only one that knew how to cook---cook gumbo in
particular. Oh, Jane knew how to make rice.” Anita commented how lost she felt during this activity. She was not from Louisiana, so the concept of making a gumbo was unfamiliar. She said,

It was kinda like two or three in this group did this and two or three in that group was making a potato salad. This little group was, it was weird, it was kinda the way it turned out. It was like I got the gumbo, you go ahead and get something else. I forgot what me and Mike did. We just kinda watched everybody because I’ve never made gumbo in my life before. I can do a good beef stew. So, I guess it would be a kind of cultural thing on that.

Students in this group understood the implications of cultural values, rather than community health theories, from this group activity. However, with the adjacent lecture, the teacher was able to bridge the gap between the group activity of making a gumbo and understanding the concept of community health theories.

Objective # 2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher gave each group a handout with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house. Each group was assigned a different developmental age to discuss how they would respond to the situation. When asked if they met objective 2 through this group activity, five students told me they did. One student said she did not. Jen explained how the group worked together to help her understand stressors in families with different developmental stages. She said,

Everybody in my group comes from different backgrounds. We all kinda have the same family structure, except Anita. Anita is a mom and she knows some stuff. Katie has a lot of extended family in her family, so she babysat and has grandmothers. So, we all kinda put in our information about our own knowledge. When it would come to developmental milestones of an infant, Katie and Anita could tell us a little more and give us examples that would help us understand and things like that. We could all give examples that would help it sink in more.
Jane added that sharing personal experiences helped her see the course content from a different perspective. “…we just kinda helped each other get things from different points of view.” Anita gained knowledge when the younger members of her group shared their view of the course content. She admitted the younger students have a different perspective because of their own developmental stages. She stated, “They have, being younger, they have different ways of looking at things than as I would.” Mike’s understanding of how to apply community health theories to different developmental age groups was enhanced when group members shared their personal experiences and knowledge. “It was really hard for us to go from [caring for an] individual to replacing the community as a client. And I think working together and sharing information is where it helped.” Katie viewed the group members as her resource for learning information. “…other than the fact that if I didn’t understand something, then hopefully they did.” When students’ shared their knowledge, Katie was able to learn the course content about different developmental needs.

One student, Kristen, denied learning of this course objective took place. When asked if the student interactions helped her gain knowledge about developmental needs of individuals, families, and groups, she replied, “I don’t know.”

Students gained knowledge of how stress affects individuals, in various developmental stages, when group members shared both personal and professional experiences. Sharing knowledge from personal experiences created the space for students to move from focusing on individuals to groups of clients in the community.

Objective # 3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community.
The teacher assigned each group different scenarios from a worksheet. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process. When asked if they met objective 3 through this group activity, four students told me they did. Two students told me they did not.

In order for the group members to share their knowledge, group tasks were divided among the group members. Thus, structuring of the group tasks used to develop a nursing care plan help to create learning for Jen. She explained, “We generally broke everything up and one person would do it… but then by the end, we would all generally have helped someone do part of theirs. The majority of the time we shared our answers with each other.” Anita added, “We were able to communicate with each other.” Kristen commented how this process helped her gain knowledge of the nursing process. She said, “If I didn’t know a specific diagnosis, they would help me to pick out a diagnosis. It would help me understand it better.” Jane explained how the social interactions helped her learn to communicate while developing a nursing care plan.

Usually we divide them [the questions] up, so if there is a certain number of questions, we each take a question or two questions a piece and divide it up. We kind of do our own little part and then put them all together. We communicate well. We each take our own part and if we have someone who cannot find their answers, then we all help to try and find those answers.

Barriers to learning included working individually on group assignments, and not exploring ways to solve clinical problems. Working individually on group assignments was not viewed as group work, according to Katie. “We just did our own---for the most part, most of us did our own thing. No, I didn’t even interact with any of them.” Thus, Katie believes the social interactions among group members did not help her gain knowledge of the nursing process. Mike
believed the group members were too narrowly focused on finding solutions for an individual’s problem, resulting in a lack of understanding of how to use the nursing process for a community.

That goes back to using the nursing process on the individual—that is what we have been focused on to the past two years. So, now stepping up to the community, you have to look at it in the same way—but on a broader scale. And, I think, many of the people in the group, including myself at times, were looking at—were focused—were too individualized with our nursing interventions and diagnoses that we are using for the community—were better for more of an individual. We were too compact, I guess. We weren’t broad enough in our thinking.

Group structure became the means for students to work together in developing a nursing care plan. Students divided the tasks, worked individually, and then collectively to develop a care plan. At times, this group structure helped students communicate and make independent decisions regarding the care plan. For some students, the group structure enhanced learning; for other students, the group structure became an impediment for learning to take place.

Objective #4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students in each group were given individual assignments to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. When asked if they met objective 4 through this group activity, four students believed sharing knowledge enhanced their critical thinking skills. Jen explained,

Katie did a good job with that assignment cause she has a lot of experience working in health care and so has Anita. So, every time we would throw out an answer, they would say, “Well, think about it like this. And if you did it this way, you would hurt the patient this way.” So, Katie and Anita helped us a lot on that on the critical thinking part and making right decisions because they have had experience…. Mike did too, because he would make you question a lot of stuff.

Jane’s critical thinking skills were enhanced when she was able to view the subject content from another perspective. “Well, they help you to think or to look at it from different points of view,
so I guess that all helps our critical thinking.” Mike’s critical thinking skills were enhanced when the group members brainstormed for answers. This sharing of knowledge helped Mike gain knowledge of the course content.

I think in the group, we realize that by bouncing ideas off of each other, that was our critical thinking. One person would come up with one idea and they would say it. And then someone else would say, “yeah, but how?” I play the Devil’s advocate a lot. And, um, so playing the Devil’s advocate, at least one of us in the group generally most of the time did that. We could---it gave us a broader picture. It opened us up to knowing that there is not just one way of looking at things. There are several ways of looking at things, which can---that opened up how many nursing---the etiologies that we could see. I think that is what critical thinking is all about---not just being able to see one side of the picture; you have to be able to see---if it is opposing views or opposing opinions; if you can see both of those sides, you can, you can have a better understanding of both of them. So, I think you can make a better decision and I think you can make a safer decision, that way. Nobody has all the information. But the more information you have, the better your decisions are going to be.

Sharing correct information was viewed as being accountable to the group members, according to Katie. She explained,

We were all pretty good about finishing our questions. You know it was important to me personally that, you know, if I was assigned to do something correctly, to get the right answer, then everybody in that class was expecting me to at least have that answer correct. I think we all pretty much had that concern.

Mike shared a similar view of accountability as Katie. He said, “We pretty much looked out for each other, accountability wise. Sometimes, we would separate the questions and we would each do our individual part---but then we would bring it back to the group.”

Barriers to learning included absent group members and having conversations about non-school activities. Jane experienced frustration when group members were absent from the group activities. Missing class was the same, according to Jane, as missing work in the hospital. Jane said,

I guess in the nursing profession, it kinda makes you learn that you can’t always depend on everybody else except yourself, cause when they don’t show up for work and you’ve
got to do your work as well as theirs, it’s like if you were to be in a hospital. I’ve seen that happen in the hospital.

Kristen did not gain knowledge of the course content because she missed class during the group activity. Anita expressed frustration about the social conversations that take place among the group members, which resulted in a barrier to her learning.

To a certain extent, it seems like you work on the project for a while and then they start talking about something else and I’m sitting here trying to do my part. And they are talking about their birthmarks one day and I go “what does that got to do with the content of the whole situation.

According to some students, their critical thinking skills were enhanced through the group activity. Students were accountable for sharing correct information to group members and the class as a whole. However, being absent from group activities affected one student’s learning. She believed her learning was impeded when other members of the group were absent. When students had social conversations that did not relate to the group activity, this interfered with one student’s learning.

Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice.

The teacher assigned scenarios about the incidence of diseases among different age groups. Students had to have research skills in order to critique and analyze the vital statistics found in the scenarios. When asked if they met objective 5 through this group activity, five students told me they did. One student told me she did not. Jen stated,

Um, critiquing research studies, um, Katie and Mike did good in that one, because they both looked real deep into things. Uh, Anita did good with that one, too, but I would say Katie and Mike helped us more out with that cause they read more in-depth to things. If we didn’t, then they would help us to see something in a different way to look at it differently.

Kristen claimed the group helped her understand the assignment about critiquing. “It helped me understand it [the assignment] because it was kinda confusing. I wasn’t sure where Mrs. Cosby
was coming from. With the worksheet, I was lost.” Anita gained an appreciation of the importance of community health nursing with this group activity. She said,

I guess when you look at the vital statistics or whatever you want to call it—it shows you how much importance community health nursing is. This what I learned most from this class because being a floor nurse---a psychiatric floor nurse---you don’t think about the community and what you need to go out there.

Katie explained how the group members worked together sharing their knowledge of research.

Jane had the calculator and she did all the calculations. We just told her what to calculate and she said, “Okay, this is what I got.” Either Jen or somebody went behind her and checked it and said, “Okay, that is right.

Mike explained the importance of the group members sharing their knowledge.

The way you look at an article, what you were looking for and why they based what they based and did what they did and where they go their information from and everything like that. So, that as a group, we would have a total understanding of what that person did or what this group did or whatever. And, I think we did that.

Lack of time to complete task became a barrier for Jane’s learning of the course content.

Well, we just kinda like read over it. I kinda felt rushed cause there was a lot of material, like with the statistics and stuff. We just kind of learned what we had to learn for the questions that we had to answer. So, I don’t think we critiqued it all that well.

In conclusion, students’ verbalized that sharing personal and professional experiences during the group activities created a space for learning. Students provided structure to the group by assigning tasks to be completed. This created a learning space where students could work independently, and share their knowledge collectively in order to achieve the course objectives.

The group activities as teaching strategies did not help some students achieve the objectives. At times, some students felt pressured to complete the assignment. Limiting the time to complete the group activities became a barrier to students’ learning of the course content. The objectives could not be met through these group activities if they were absent. Both the students
who did attend class and those who were absent had their learning of the course content affected by absenteeism.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which social interactions created learning and ways in which social interactions impeded their learning. Table 4.5 illustrates the group processes, which enhanced learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Table 4.5
Characteristics from “The Survivors”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commun. with others</td>
<td>Shared knowledge; structure of group tasks</td>
<td>Shared knowledge; structure of group tasks</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared knowledge enhanced critical thinking skills</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>App. of community health nursing</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which facilitated learning, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to shared knowledge and the second theme related to group structure. In order for the group members to share knowledge, they had to assign the tasks to group members.
By students sharing both personal and professional experiences, they viewed the course content from different perspectives. Through sharing, students increased their communication and critical thinking skills. One student gained an appreciation of community health nursing. Most of the students achieved objectives 2-5 by sharing their knowledge with each other. One student achieved objective 1 through the sharing of knowledge with group members.

In order for group members to share their knowledge, group tasks were divided among the group members. Students became accountable to the group members by answering the questions correctly. Accountability became the way group members completed the assigned tasks correctly, and then shared this information with the group members. By dividing tasks, students were able to provide a structure to the group, thus achieving objective 3.

Next, Table 4.6 illustrates group processes, which became barriers to student learning, as described by the students.

**Themes.** Two themes emerged from the characteristics described by the students. The first theme related to ineffective group activity; the second theme related to student relationships.

The group activity as a teaching strategy did not achieve learning of the course content, according to some students. During some group activities, students felt pressure to complete the assignment, which interfered with their learning of the course content. One student believed her learning was impeded primarily because the students divided up the tasks to complete the assignment. She claimed she worked better individually instead of collectively as a group. Some students did not meet objectives 1, 2, and 3.

Students’ relationships during the group activity became a barrier to learning. One student believed the group members were restrictive in their thinking during the group activity, which interfered with his learning. Having social conversations during the group activity, instead
of focusing on the activity also became a barrier to learning. Two students did not meet objectives 3 and 4. Absent from the group activities indicated a lack of accountability to the group members, according to one student. When students were absent from group activities, not only was their learning impeded, other group members lost an opportunity to learn through sharing of knowledge. Having students absent from group activities created a barrier to learning the course content necessary to achieve objective 4.

Table 4.6
Characteristics from “The Survivors” With Barriers to Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Was not familiar with gumbo</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Worked individually, not as a group</td>
<td>Restrictive thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conversations did not pertain to assignment</td>
<td>Absent group members;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absent from class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of time to complete assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which became barriers to student learning, as described by the students.

Professional Development

In this section, I discuss how students’ interactions within the group promoted or impeded professional development. I use the course objectives and group activities as a guide to analyze if these interactions promoted or impeded the students’ professional development.
Objective # 6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system.

The teacher gave each group a newspaper. She instructed the group to identify an article about a public health issue and share it with the class. The goal of this group activity was to help students understand the role of a community health nurse in relation to the United States health care delivery system. When asked if they met objective 6 through this group activity, two students told me they did. Katie believed the group members worked together to help her achieve this objective. She explained,

Well, like we passed the newspaper down and if somebody found something relevant, then we would read it, and if they didn’t like it, then someone else would read something else. Ok, well, if that sounded good and then somebody else would read something else, and if that sounded better, we would say, “Oh, let’s do that.” And so we had a general consensus about what we wanted to present.

When asked if this activity helped her learn about issues related to community health nursing, she replied, “Yes.” Anita gained knowledge of the professional role of the community health nurse, not only from the group activity, but also, from the teacher’s lecture. She said,

Well, I was able to see where they come from. You know from the beginning nursing just going out visiting--like a home health nurse. And now, they [community health nurses] have gone to where they are doing teaching---more teaching than nursing.

When asked if they met objective 6 through this group activity, four students told me they did not. Jen explained how she had already read the section on the historical development in her textbook prior to this group activity. Therefore, she did not believe the group activity influenced her learning of the course content for this objective. She explained,

It didn’t, because that was the first part of the semester. I had gone and read all the chapter by myself and our group assignment was the lady that started the Henry Street Settlement. We were to research her. And so, really it didn’t help. I just went and did my part. They did their part and that was our first group assignment. We each did our own part at home. We didn’t talk about it, we just each did our own part and presented it.
Kristen learned about the historical development of the community health nurse from reading the textbook, not the group activity. Mike explained why this group activity did not help him learn about the historical development of community health nursing. He said, “Honestly, I don’t think it did, because I think all of us are really bored with history.”

Only two students gained knowledge of the historical development of community health nursing through the group activity. Most of the students used other methods to learn about the historical development, such as reading the textbook or drawing from knowledge gained from previous courses.

Objective #7: Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at-risk individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students were given individual assignments to implement a teaching plan they developed for unwed teenage mothers. Other teaching strategies included worksheets with different scenarios. Students were asked to develop a nursing care plan as if they were the community health nurse. When asked if they met objective 7 through these group activities, three students told me they did. Mike and Jen claimed teamwork helped them accomplish their goal, which promoted their professional development. Jen said,

That was good. Cause each of us had our own thing that we could have done. You know when we had a scenario, each of us had a different idea or intervention of what to do. And we would put them all together and talk about all of them….we all worked together on it and interventions.

Mike added,

Because whenever we would bounce ideas off of each other, we would get the bigger picture. We would go from the individual to the family and in the exercise about dental health, we talked about the community. One group did the
individual; one group did the family; then as a group we bounced ideas off of each other. And we came up with interventions on how to do this.

Anita gained knowledge of the professional role of the community health nurse through the group activity. She explained,

First, you have to analyze the group to see what it is they need—whether it is a group or individual and then set up what you need to provide help for them. In any situation, you have a certain patient that is being influenced by the particular person you have whether it is family or the community. They all kind of interact—so you are going to have to look at the whole picture.

Lack of teamwork with her group members impeded Jane’s, Katie’s, and Kristen’s professional development. Jane said, “Like all of our topics went together, but I didn’t know what the other person was teaching unless I read the paper in which I didn’t, cause I just read what I had to do.” Kristen replied, “I had to leave early, so I didn’t hear them talk about it. They might have talked about it [the teaching plan] after I left, but not while I was there.” Katie commented how lack of group involvement contributed to her professional development. “I don’t think too much thought was put into who does what and why we are gonna do it. We just get up there and do it.”

Three students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse when they implemented their teaching plans to the unwed teenage mothers. The remaining three students did not achieve this objective due to lack of teamwork among group members. One student had to leave early and was unable to provide feedback to her group members. Another student believed the teaching plans were done individually and not as a group. Thus, lack of teamwork impeded some students’ achieving this course objective.

Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community-based settings.
The teacher used the teaching plan as a way to introduce the students to the role of the community health nurse. Another teaching strategy was inviting guest speakers from different community-based settings to discuss the professional roles of a community health nurse. When asked if they met objective 8 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Jen gained knowledge of the community health nurse through this group activity. She explained,

We didn’t like this class too much. And so, we were talking about the community health nurse and we didn’t know if we would want to go and be a community health nurse. But then, when we started talking about all the different roles that they do, then it was like, “well, I could do this and I could do that and what does this person do?” We talked together a lot about that.

Anita, Mike, and Katie interpreted the different roles students displayed while implementing their teaching plans. Anita described Jane as the leader of the group. She said,

“There would be one that would take the leadership role in the group. I think Jane was the leader of the group.” Katie recognized several roles of a community health nurse as she observed her group members presenting their teaching plans to the unwed teenage mothers. She explained,

Kristen definitely did the teaching, cause she was teaching CPR. Jane did the nutrition, so that was definitely teaching. Mike was kind of like doing the teaching thing, but he kinda got down to the counselor level because he got up right there with them [the teen mothers]. He was trying to interact, but I guess they weren’t very responsive. So, I guess he just basically went back to teaching.

Mike addressed how this group activity influenced his understanding of the professional role of the community health nurse. He said,

When it comes to interpreting the roles, I think one person will understand one part—one role pretty well; another person would understand another role. It was only through group discussion about it that I think everybody got a good understanding about who the teacher is, or how are they going to teach and how are they going to be an advocate, or researcher and everything. Like, I understood how we were going to be a teacher and how we were going to be a researcher and how we were going to be doing certain things. But, there were other aspects that I was a little shaky on because they seemed a lot like other roles. But there was a distinct difference. I think by working in groups---we would come to an understanding together.
Jane believed the group activity did not promote her professional development. She explained, “I don’t know if my group this semester actually helped me interpret those roles because we’ve been learning about them ever since we’ve started nursing school. I didn’t really see any other roles, just teacher.” Kristen agreed she did not see different roles being played out by the students. Thus, this group activity did not help her gain an understanding of the professional role of a community health nurse. Most of the students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse through this group activity. By understanding the role of the community health nurse, they were able to see their own professional role.

In conclusion, the group activities as teaching strategies helped the some students gain an understanding of the historical development of the community nurse, thus promoting their professional development. Students learned to work together as a team by building a consensus among group members during the group activities. This, too, helped to promote students’ professional development. Students gained an awareness of their professional role as a community health nurse while implementing their teaching plans.

At times, the group activities did not help some students achieve these objectives. Knowledge of the course content pertaining to these objectives came from the teacher’s lectures or their textbook, not the group activity.

**Analysis**

Students acknowledged ways in which their social interactions promoted their professional development, and ways it impeded their professional development. See Table 4.7.
Table 4.7
Characteristics from “The Survivors”, Which Promoted Professional Development, as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of role of community health nurse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gained knowledge of role of community health nurse through group consensus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recognized roles of community health nurse in students</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Recognized roles of community health nurse in students</td>
<td>Recognized roles of community health nurse in students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which promoted professional development, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to role development, and the second theme related to teamwork.

Role development occurred through the social interactions among the students. Students observed members of their group in a variety of roles during the implementation of their teaching plans. Group activities helped students expand their knowledge of the role of the community health nurse. Some students met objectives 6, 7, and 8 through the group activities.

Students learned how to work together as a team, which is an important element of professional development. Through their efforts of teamwork, the students learned how to reach a consensus about solutions to nursing problems. The group activities helped students participate...
in a team structure, which promoted their professional development. Students achieved objectives 6 and 7 through the group activities. See Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8**

*Characteristics from “The Survivors”, Which Impeded Professional Development, as the Criterion Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Absenteeism of group members</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lack of teamwork</td>
<td>Lack of teamwork</td>
<td>Lack of teamwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td>Lack of student involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The data in the columns represent the group processes, which impeded professional development.

**Themes.** Two themes emerged from the interviews. One theme related to lack of student involvement, and the second theme related to ineffective group activities. Lack of student involvement in the form of absenteeism and lack of working together as a team impeded the professional development of three students. The group activities did not help three students meet the course objectives. These students did not achieve objectives 6, 7, and 8, thus hindering their professional development.

**Summary**

The social interactions among “The Survivors” indicated a high degree of group cohesiveness. Students’ learning of the course content was influenced by two cliques, which formed from the social interactions. Students’ professional development was influenced by one clique, which formed from the social interactions. The group cohesiveness score indicated a moderate degree of cohesiveness within the group members who influenced professional development.
Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding the objectives measuring course content learning. These themes related to shared knowledge and group structure. By socially interacting, students shared both personal and professional knowledge. Sharing of knowledge helped the students view the course content from different perspectives. Dividing the tasks enabled students to demonstrate accountability. Assigning tasks, answering the questions correctly, and sharing this information created learning of the course content.

Two themes emerged as barriers to learning. The themes related to ineffective group activities and student relationships. At times, the students felt the group activity did not enhance their learning. Time limits on completion of tasks, working individually instead of collectively as a group, and group members being restrictive with their thinking became obstacles for completion of the group activities. Having social conversations during the group activity created a barrier to learning. Being part of a group in which the members frequently missed class created a barrier to learning. Being absent from class and missing the group activity also impeded learning.

Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding objectives measuring professional development. These themes related to role development and teamwork. Some students observed members of their group in a variety of roles during the group activities. The social interactions during a group activity expanded students’ knowledge of the roles of a community health nurse. Students discovered their interpersonal relationship skills helped them function as a team, thus promoting professional development.

Two themes emerged as barriers to professional development. The themes related to lack of student involvement and ineffective group activities. When students were absent from group activities or chose not to participate with the group members during a group activity,
professional development was impeded. Some students did not believe the group activities helped them achieve the course content. Their professional development was not promoted through these group activities.
Chapter 5: “The Laughers”

Findings

“The Laughers” consisted of seven students. Of these seven, five females agreed to participate in interviews. Four of these five were 21 years old and one was 20 years old. Paula, a 21-year-old single Black female was born of an African-American mother and Nigerian father. Her primary place of residence was Virginia until her parents divorced. After her parents divorced, Paula and her mother returned to the South. She has been living in the South for the last eight years. Paula currently lives with her mother, her grandmother, and a mentally ill aunt. Beth, a 21-year-old married White female, lives approximately thirty minutes from campus. She lives with her husband and dog. Alice, a 21-year-old single White female, lives in the dorms on campus. She is from a town west of campus in a nearby state. She states she is to be married next summer. Mary, a 21-year-old single White female, lives in an apartment with a roommate. She has an older brother and sister. One of Mary’s family members graduated from the same nursing school. Karen, a 20-year-old single White female, lives on campus in the dorms. She serves as a resident assistant to help with expenses. Karen claimed nursing is a vocation for her. Students in this group described themselves as being happy and fun to be around. During observations, I noticed these students laughing, making jokes, and having fun during class. This prompted me to name this group “The Laughers”.

Social Interactions

Course Content Learning

The following matrix was analyzed by studying who chose whom in relation to which students influenced learning of the course content. See Table 5.1.
Table 5.1  
Sociomatrix from “The Laughers”  
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who most helped the group members learn the course content. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their learning of the course content. According to Kerlinger (1986), the total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who helped others learn the course content.

Analysis of this sociomatrix indicated Beth, Karen, and Mary were the three students who influenced group members learning of the course content.

Another way of analyzing which students influenced the group’s learning of the course content is a sociogram or directed graph. In this directed graph, students influencing learning of the course content centered around Beth, Karen, and Mary. See Figure 5.1.

Based on this diagram, this group had one clique. There were three mutual choices: Beth and Karen, Beth and Mary and Karen and Mary. The clique formed the center of these interactional patterns in this group, which influenced course content learning. Alice and Paula were chosen by different members of the clique. These one-way choices indicated Alice and Paula had the least influence on students’ learning of the course content.
Another useful tool for analyzing interactional patterns include the choice status of the person in the group. See Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice Status of “The Laughers”</th>
<th>With Influence on Learning as Criterion Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Beth, Karen, and Mary were chosen more frequently than Alice and Paula. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interaction patterns in a group. Using the number of mutual pairs, group cohesiveness was computed. In this group, there were three
mutual pairs of choices. The group cohesiveness was computed as $3/((3 \times 5)/2) = .40$ indicating a moderate degree of cohesiveness.

Professional Development

In this choice matrix, I analyzed which students promoted professional development based on students’ choices. See Table 5.3.

### Table 5.3
**Sociomatrix from “The Laughers”**
**With Professional Development as Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who influenced professional development. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their professional development. The total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who influenced professional development.

Analysis of this sociomatrix indicated Beth and Karen were the top two students who influenced professional development. Alice was the second highest student who influenced professional development. Mary and Paula influenced professional development the least.

A directed graph depicted the following interactions. See Figure 5.2. In this direct graph, Beth and Karen shared the center of choices. Beth had two mutual choices: one between
Beth and Karen and one with Beth and Mary. Karen also had two mutual choices: one between Beth and Karen and one between Paula and Karen. One clique formed within these interactions.

![Figure 5.2](image)

**Figure 5.2**

Sociogram of “The Laughers”

With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

A choice status of each person in the group was computed next. See Table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Choice Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.4**

Choice Status of “The Laughers”

With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Beth and Karen were chosen as the two students who influenced professional development. Alice had the next highest score. She had some influence on students’ professional development. Paula and Mary had the least influence on the students’ professional development. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

I then computed the group cohesiveness. Again, with three mutual pair choices, the group cohesiveness was computed $3/((3\times5)/2) = .40$ indicating a moderate group cohesiveness.
Analysis

While the group cohesiveness was moderate, one clique was formed, which influenced students’ learning of the course content. Beth, Karen, and Mary formed the clique. Beth, Karen, and Mary had higher choice status scores than Alice and Paula indicating Beth, Karen, and Mary were most often chosen, or were the most preferred, group members to help the others learn the course content.

One clique formed among the group members when asked which students influenced professional development. Both Beth and Karen had two mutual choices and seemed to share the center of choices. Alice was the second highest choice among the students. The two students who least influenced professional development were Mary and Paula. Mary was instrumental in helping students learn the course content, but was not influential in their professional development. Paula was not significant in either the learning of the course content, or professional development. Alice was significant in influencing professional development, but not course content learning.

Course Content Learning

In this section, I discuss how students learned the course content using the course objectives and group activities as guides. I also discuss how students’ interactions impeded their learning of the course content.

Objective # 1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication from borrowed theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals, families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health.
In order to understand this objective, the teacher instructed the students to develop a gumbo recipe. Each group then had to present to the class the ingredients they would have placed in a gumbo. The goal of this group activity was to help the students understand the concept of community health theories based on cultural values and belief patterns. When asked if they met objective 1 through the group activity, the students told me they did not. Alice did not think the group had worked on an activity, which helped her understand community health theories.

We see the theory and try to understand it without trying to listen to other people. I mean, in the group, it helps you to learn when you hear other peoples’ point of views---but I don’t know if we did that because it was just stated there for you. It was cut and dry.

Karen did not remember the group assignment. Beth claimed the assignment did not help her understand theories. Mary commented,

I don’t think any of us really understand what is going on when it comes to some of the content in that class because it is handouts, and true-falses…And we are not sure if it is true or false because she [the teacher] changes her mind about that in the middle of it. So, I don’t know how well we are really understanding some of it.

When asked if the group activity helped her understand the concept of cultural values and community health theories, Mary said it did not. Paula explained why working on a group activity about cultural values and community health theories did not help her learn the course content. She said, “Honestly, I don’t think it has helped my learning. Really!! I’m more of a person who can study by myself or one or two people.”

The students in this group did not believe the group activity helped them gain knowledge about community health theories. Students commented that unclear instructions by the teacher made learning of this course objective difficult. Other students remarked they did not like working in groups. Some students could not remember the group activity.
Objective # 2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher gave each group a handout with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house. Each group was assigned a different developmental age to discuss how they would respond to the situation. For example, one group discussed how to intervene with the children living in the dirty house, another group discussed how to intervene with a newborn baby living in the dirty house, and another group discussed how to intervene with the mother who lived in the dirty house. When asked if they met objective 2 through this group activity, three students told me they did. Two students said they did not.

Paula believed the group activity helped her understand about the needs of others. She also became aware of how other students perceived families’ needs.

I think it helped because everybody had their own—it was insight into what other people felt the needs were, you know. Even though we had information that we based our assignment on—everybody got to put their own input. It let you see how other group members thought about needs in the family and groups—if they were sensitive to them or if they were just like, ‘oh, I’m just doing my job.

Students sharing their own experiences about families helped Alice understand how families coped with stress.

I think we all come from different backgrounds and different things. So, maybe what I always thought is not what someone else thinks. So everybody has a different opinion. My family is real—the average family—and so what I went through is not necessarily what other people went through, and so I can’t necessarily see their point of view unless they come out and tell me. That this is how they had life, so this is maybe another thing I’m not seeing.

Karen told me when group members shared their personal experiences, this helped her “clarify information” about how families cope with stress. Beth and Mary both claimed neither the group activity, nor the students in the group helped them gain knowledge of this objective.
Three students believed they gained an understanding of how families cope with stress through this group activity. Shared personal experiences helped to clarify information about how families cope with stress. This group activity did not help two students achieve this objective.

**Objective # 3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community.**

The teacher assigned each group different scenarios from a worksheet. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process. When asked if they met objective 3 through the group activity, four students told me they did. One student said she did not. Mary agreed she learned the course content using the group activity as a guide to complete this objective. She stated,

Well, we worked together on our papers [group activities] and a lot of those, you had to come up with interventions. We all had our different ideas that we would put in. Some people would come up with stuff that we wouldn’t think of. So, it gave you new ideas on how to interact and intervene with different situations.

Beth explained how working on the group assignments enhanced her communication skills. By using communication skills and teamwork, Beth was able to develop nursing care plans using the nursing process.

Well, working with a group---you have to have good communication skills. We did everything together and everybody had their ideas and we put it all together. Then we would discuss it. We had to work together as a team.

Karen explained how the group members structured themselves in order to develop a nursing care plan using the nursing process.

So, when we have an assignment, we look at what we have first—then that would be like assessment. Then we always plan; like sometimes we split up the questions. If we have seven questions, one person does one question. I think we all assess together and we pretty much plan together. But when you get further down to diagnosing and implementing, stuff like that, that’s where I think it comes into play, like depending how many questions we have—when we divide them up. I think that is more of an individual
thing, because a lot of times we say, ‘you do this one and I will do this one’. So, it is more individual.

Alice believed this group activity helped her gain knowledge of objective 3 when she was able to view the material from different perspectives.

The nursing process, um, like the goals and interventions that I came up with is not the same that someone else came up with. So, it gives me another point of view. Um, I mean, I had trouble coming up—not coming up with the goals—but maybe using like the same ideas for each thing; someone else has to come up with ideas. So, it is helping me a lot to….listen to new ideas and maybe hear what other people had to say because I have something to say in my mind already. I’m the person in the group that likes to hear what everybody says instead of saying what I think. I think I would go along more with what people say. I like to hear what everybody else says instead of just saying ‘this is what I feel.’

Paula believed the group structure impeded her learning of objective 3.

Once again, I don’t think it really helped. I mean, we are all doing some group work on that---but just like I said for the first one---I’m more of an individual learner. When we get in the group, we just do the assignment, you know. Like “what page—let’s find the answer.”

Four students’ understanding of the nursing process was enhanced through this group activity. Their communication and independent decision-making skills improved while working in a group. Students divided group assignments, which helped them with their independent decision-making skills. One student believes she learns better individually, not in a group.

Objective #4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students in each group were given individual assignments to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Although the assignments were individual, each group member had to attend the program for the unwed teenage mothers to provide support, encouragement, and feedback to their group members who were presenting. Worksheets with different scenarios were
also used as a teaching strategy to achieve this objective. Students were instructed to demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions by developing care plans. When asked if they met objective 4 through the group activities, two students told me they did. Three students told me they did not. Beth claimed accountability and sharing knowledge with each other helped her learn the course content.

In a group, in order for it to be working well, you have to be there to cooperate. That is accountability…Well, I think they can bring their ideas into and help you to critically think something you are blocked completely from it. You can learn from that.

Beth further explained what she meant about being blocked. “Maybe if you are reading a question and you completely did not think of that aspect to bring into it---they could have helped you see that---to bring it together to solve the problem.”

Karen expressed how teamwork helped improve her critical thinking skills and demonstrated accountability for independent nursing decisions.

Sometimes when we have a question that is not straightforward in the book, then we try to work together to try and figure it out. We put everybody’s opinions together to see what is the best answer that we can come up with. I think that is critically thinking together. I don’t know that we do anything with accountability too much. It is just that everybody takes part. Like if we had a homework assignment, a table, we would say, ‘you do this specific number’; then we would expect that when you come back to class the next day—you would have it done. So, I guess you would try to have accountability; that you know and trust that when they come back they would do their part.

Paula believed the group activity did not enhance her critical thinking skills. She replied, “Well, as far as critical thinking is concerned---some people are more aggressive in the group. So, they would say ‘Oh, okay, I got it.’ I have to think harder and longer.” Paula expressed how the other group members received her values and input.

As far as accountability is concerned, I think everybody is equally accountable in the group. Personally, I really feel that I bring in my values, you know what I am saying---into a group. And, most people don’t agree with that now adays, you know what I am saying. Supposing we were talking about---like what we had today. We had a child that
has had two abortions and her mother is saying ‘let’s put her on birth control.’ Everybody was saying that she needs to be taught how to use birth control. I said, ‘ I think you can still attempt to teach abstinence.” Nobody agreed with that though.

Mary explained how absenteeism of group members affected her learning of objective 4.

…because when one member of the group is not there---it really…especially when we have things where each one of us is assigned something to do… and if one of them doesn’t show up, it shows you what impact that has---as far as accountability. It puts us in a bind. It means that the other ones have to hurry up and get something together and basically do what that person should have done to present it. Every person is important.

Alice stated she did not think she gained knowledge through the group activity.

Only two students achieved objective 4 through this group activity. Working together, being accountable, and sharing their knowledge helped two students achieve objective 4. One student felt disrespected by the group members, thus impeding her learning of the course content. Another student believed being absent from the group activity demonstrated a lack of accountability to the group members. This lack of accountability imposed an added responsibility to other group members to complete the assignment, thus impeding on students’ learning.

Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice.

The teacher assigned scenarios about the incidence of diseases among different age groups. Students had to have research skills in order to critique and analyze the vital statistics found in the scenarios. When asked if they met objective 5 through this group activity, three students told me they did. Two students expressed they did not gain further knowledge through the group activity.

Paula believed she learned the course content because group members shared their knowledge of critiquing research articles.
That helped. It helped like I said before, because everybody has their way of seeing how this article went. Because everybody’s input helped me to see in their way—their light. So, I was able to look at it in another light. If I was just reading it, I would be seeing it one way; but when they put their input in—I can say, “Oh, okay, that’s true”. So, I think that helps.

Karen agreed sharing of knowledge helped her critique the research articles.

It helped me understand that better because we did it together. Sometimes, we have the articles to read and the main thing we do is that we will summarize it together. We take out what we think is important. We have done that a lot with articles—just take out what is important and talk about it.

Beth claimed being able to compromise about different ways to critique the research articles helped her achieve objective 5.

Everybody has a different opinion. I share my thoughts. I will still listen to what everyone else is thinking and say, “Well, yea, that is right.” And then we will work out a way for us to work together. We will compromise.

Alice became frustrated when the group members would not compromise and agree on what needed to be presented to the class. Alice commented on the how the decision was made to present the information about the research article to the class.

We all had different ideas, I think. None of us really wanted to change. The instructor called for one person to present for the group; that person just presented her ideas…we should have compromised and listened better to each other’s thoughts and ideas to present as a group instead of just individually.

Mary did not believe she learned the course content through this group activity. She stated she “learned how to critique research articles in the research class, not this class.”

Three students gained a better understanding of critiquing research articles through this group activity. They learned by working together, sharing their knowledge, and compromising, they were able to achieve this objective. The group activity did not help two students gain knowledge of this objective.
In conclusion, some students’ critical thinking and interpersonal relationship skills were enhanced through the group activities. Students gained knowledge by sharing personal experiences, especially related to cultural values and their families. Sharing of knowledge helped the students understand community health nursing. Students structured the group by dividing tasks, working independently on the tasks, and then sharing their knowledge collectively in order to achieve the course objectives.

The group activities as teaching strategies did not help some students achieve the course objectives. At times, the teacher’s instructions were unclear creating confusion. Limiting the time to complete the group activities influenced students’ learning of the course content. Being absent from participating in the group activity affected students’ learning.

Analysis

Students acknowledge ways in which social interactions created learning and ways in which social interactions impeded their learning. Table 5.5 illustrates the group processes, which enhanced learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to shared knowledge. The second theme related to teamwork.

Sharing of knowledge occurred in various forms. Students shared their personal experiences with each other, which helped other students view the course content from a different perspective. Students also provided input on ways to interact and intervene with different groups, such as families and at risk populations. These social interactions reflected the sensitivity of group members to others. Sharing of knowledge helped some students achieve objectives 2, 3, 4, and 5.
Table 5.5
Characteristics from “The Laughers”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sharing of personal experiences</td>
<td>Viewed content from different perspectives</td>
<td>Sharing input reflected sensitivity to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Viewed content from different perspectives</td>
<td>Worked together as a team; enhanced communication</td>
<td>Worked individually and collectively</td>
<td>Gave her new ideas on how to interact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accountability to group members; shared knowledge</td>
<td>Teamwork and trust of group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Working together and compromising</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which enhanced learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Teamwork occurred in various ways. For one student, the group worked individually and collectively, which enhanced her learning. For another student, the group worked together as a community—to achieve one common goal. Another student learned the importance of being able to compromise with other students, thus enhancing her ability to work with the others.

Accountability to the group members was important. Students were willing to cooperate and trust each other to complete the assigned tasks enhancing their learning of the course content.

Teamwork helped some students achieve objectives 3, 4, and 5.

Next, I include Table 5.5, which illustrates group processes that impede student learning, as described by the students.
### Table 5.6
Characteristics from “The Laughers”
With Impediments of Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No sharing of knowledge</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neither group activity nor students helped her learn course content</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working together collectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Group activity did not help her gain knowledge</td>
<td>Absenteeism by other students</td>
<td>Aggressive group members; didn’t feel her values were accepted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No compromising</td>
<td>Did not learn course content from this class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data in the columns represent the group processes, which impeded learning of the course content, as described by the students.

**Themes.** Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to student relationships, and the second theme related to ineffective group activities.

Student relationships impeded students’ learning primarily because of poor interpersonal relationship skills. For example, one student felt her values were not respected. She also perceived aggression from some student impeding her learning of the course content. Another
student believed students failed to compromise on certain tasks impeding her learning. If there was lack of student relationships due to absenteeism, learning was compromised. Too much group work involving student relationships impeded one student’s learning. Being rushed to complete a task became a barrier to learning. Poor interpersonal relationship skills interfered with achieving objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for some students.

The group activities did not help some students achieve objectives 1, 2, 4, and 5. On one occasion, the teacher provided unclear instructions creating confusion during the group activity. One student claimed knowledge of research was from another class, therefore, she did not gain knowledge through the group activity. One student claimed she was an individual learner, not a group learner.

**Professional Development**

In this section, I discuss how students’ interactions within the group promoted or impeded professional development. I use the course objectives and group activities as a guide to analyze if these interactions promoted or impeded their professional development.

**Objective # 6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system.**

The teacher gave each group a newspaper. She instructed the group to identify an article about a public health issue and share it with the class. The goal of this group activity was to help students understand the role of a community health nurse in relation to the United States health care delivery system. When asked if they met objective 6 through the group activity, three students said they did. Two students said they did not. Beth related working in groups to complete the newspaper assignment was like working with team members on a clinical unit.
The groups have made me see that you can’t just say, ‘I don’t like group work because…’ You know you have these bad people in the group—you can’t exclude them because you are going out into the professional world. You are going to have to work with some people that are just not as motivated as you are and do their work half way. But you are going to have to figure out a way to motivate them or to find a way to get them to start working with you. You can’t just say “I’m not going to deal with them.” You are going to have to deal with them.

While trying to locate the newspaper article, Karen realized the importance of being able to tolerate others’ differences in order to achieve objective 6. She said,

I think, indirectly, it probably helps me professionally to learn how to work with different types of people, because we are not all the same and to be tolerant of people that are not like you; and to accept and to work with people who are not like you.

Mary believed she learned the importance of group members working together similar to a community health nurse working with community members. A community health nurse needs to be competent in the field of public health. According to Mary, the group activity motivated her to understand the importance of the role of the community health nurse.

Yeah, it does. Because we kinda push each other to be, you know… Well, when I think of being a professional, one of the biggest aspects of being professional is knowing what you are doing. We push each other to know your stuff…we expect it [the job assigned] to be done. It is not a ‘said’ thing—it is just an expectation. That way, we push each other to do it.

Alice could not remember the group activity. Even when I reminded her about the group activity, she still did not remember how it influenced her understanding of the role of the community health nurse. Paula claimed she did not gain knowledge of public health issues or the roles of the community health nurse through the group activity.

It didn’t really influence. Like I said, we had everything laid out on paper. …I had what was going to be on the test. That didn’t help me. Mrs. Cosby handed out the lay out of the history, so that’s all I needed. I don’t think the group helped out.

Most of the students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse through the group activity. Two students did not. One student could not remember the activity...
and the other student used the handouts from the teacher as a resource instead of students from her group.

Objective # 7: Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students were given individual assignments to implement a teaching plan they developed for unwed teenage mothers. When asked if they met objective 7 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Alice saw difference roles from the students when they implemented their teaching plans.

There were a lot of different roles. Maybe, I can see myself functioning in one role. But you see other people and they have their own different way [of functioning] and you say, ‘I should be doing this as well as what I am doing.’ And, um, I see myself as a caregiver. But, then there is a leader role. There are certain things you see everybody in the group pretty much has their own role. And you say, ‘I should be doing this and not doing this.’

Karen believed the group activity for objective 7 simulated the daily life of a professional community health nurse.

Because I think in nursing---in daily application of the nursing career---you would have to do stuff like our group is doing, with meeting together at the beginning; splitting up and doing individual roles; then coming back together evaluating. I think it is definitely applicable to daily life as a nurse.

Mary explained how working on different interventions helped her achieve objective 7, thus promoting her professional development.

Well, we worked together on our papers and a lot of those you had to come up with interventions. We all had our different ideas that we would put in. Some people would come up with stuff that we wouldn’t think of. So, it gave you new ideas on how to interact and intervene with different situations. It is not like we were students trying to learn---it was more like working together to come up with a solution to the problem---like a team.
Paula believed working on the teaching plan allowed the group to be supportive of each other, which helped her understand the role of the community health nurse. “We did have to work together when we were getting our teaching plan together because we weren’t sure. So that helped---being able to call somebody.”

Beth noticed how implementing a teaching plan to unwed teenage mothers brought an awareness of different lifestyles. She believed this awareness promoted her role as a community health nurse.

You have to be very understanding of each individual’s background because when you go out in community in another person’s home, you have to accept the way they live and maybe do some health teaching. Maybe that’s there style of living---you can’t change that. You have to accept each individual for what they are.

All the students gained an understanding of the professional role of the community health nurse through the implementation of their teaching plan. Their own professional image was enhanced through the group activity for most students.

Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community based settings.

The teacher used the teaching plan as a way to introduce the students to the role of the community health nurse. Guest speakers from different community based settings were invited to share with the students their roles as a community based nurse. This was another teaching strategy used to achieve objective 8. When asked if they met objective 8 through this group activity, four students told me they did. One student told me she did not. Betsy stated she did not observe students’ professional roles while implementing their teaching plans.
Karen expressed how implementing the teaching plan helped her understand how some students are more comfortable in the role of educator or advocator. She was able to observe students’ roles during the implementation of the teaching plan.

Even with the teen parenting teaching we did---I think it helped me understand roles maybe better by what peoples’ natural ability is. Because you can tell when we did the education for the teen parents, some people are just better at it, at some things than others. But everybody seems to have some strong point, you know. I think whatever your strong point is that should be the role you pursue. Some people are the better teachers, like in communication and direct teaching. Some people are just better at establishing a rapport with people and developing a trusting relationship---but not necessarily being in front of the class teaching. Some people are better at getting stuff together, preparing for it and doing the research. I think I really could observe that some people are just better at different roles.

Mary believed working on the teaching plan helped promote her professional development by discussing different roles with the other group members. She felt a sense of collegiality while working with the group members, which promoted her professional development.

Each of us would have a different perception of what the role of the nurse was in different settings. It just gave you the view that you may think it is one or two different things, but, no, it is actually this and they gave you their explanation. You say, ‘yeah, it could actually be that.’ Again, it is like working together---not as students---but colleagues working together to come up with one idea.

Paula observed the different roles of a community health nurse as her group members implemented their teaching plans.

Betty was definitely in the teacher role, cause she was teaching them how to do CPR and how to weigh their babies. She did a great job. Dale was more, I would say, an advocate. Alice was a teacher. Mary fit the role of counselor—or Karen—one of them. Because they were asking questions and giving back input, in the beginning. I think that was more of a counselor’s role---because they were listening and providing feedback.

Alice, also, stated she gained an awareness of the role of the professional nurse while she observed her group members implementing their teaching plans.
All but one student claimed they gained a greater understanding of the role of the professional community health nurse. Betty’s professional image was not influenced through the group activity.

In conclusion, working in the group activities provided an opportunity for students to simulate a typical workday of a community health nurse. Students learned teamwork, tolerance of others, and an appreciation for their group members, which are important elements of a professional community health nurse. The group activities helped to develop the students’ roles as a professional nurse.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which their social interactions promoted their professional development and ways it impeded their professional development. See Table 5.7.

### Table 5.7
**Characteristics from “The Laughers”**  
**Promoting Professional Development as the Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork and tolerance of others</td>
<td>Promotes competency among group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Saw different roles</td>
<td>Learned how to work with others who are different</td>
<td>Applied it to a nurse’s daily life</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Supportive of each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Saw different roles</td>
<td>Saw different roles</td>
<td>Sense of collegiality</td>
<td>Saw students in different roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data in the columns represent the group processes, which promote professional development, as described by the students.

**Themes.** Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to role development and interpersonal relationships skills.
Students observed members of their group in a variety of roles during the implementation of their teaching plans. Students demonstrated the role of the educator, advocator, and counselor. Some students instructed the teenage mothers better than others. Some students counseled the mothers easier than others. Students demonstrated their competence of teaching to a group of unwed teenagers. One student believed she could apply these roles to the daily life of a nurse. Some students achieved objectives 7 and 8.

Interpersonally, students learned to tolerate others who were different. This enabled them to work together as a team. They became supportive of each other. While implementing the teaching plan, students were no longer students. They had become colleagues. Some students achieved objective 6.

Table 5.8
Characteristics from “The Laughers”
Impeding Professional Development as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Alice</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Group activity did not help</td>
<td></td>
<td>Just wanted information for test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Did not observe roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the column represent the group processes, which impeded professional development, as described by the students.

Themes. One theme emerged from the interviews. The theme related to ineffective group activites. Alice stated that the group activity did not help her learn about the historical development of the community health nurse. Beth stated she did not observe professional roles in the other students during the presentation of their teaching plans. Paula stated she just wanted the information for the test. She did not see how the group activity promoted her professional development.
Summary

The social interactions among “The Laughers” indicated a moderate degree of group cohesiveness. There was one clique formed centering around three students. These three students influenced course content learning. Two students influenced professional development. There was no clique formed among the group members influencing professional development.

Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding the objectives measuring course content learning. These themes related to shared knowledge and teamwork. By socially interacting, students shared their knowledge in various ways. They shared personal experiences about themselves and family members. Using these personal experiences, they were able to share ways to intervene and interact with families and at-risk populations in a sensitive manner.

Students’ social interactions demonstrated teamwork. They became accountable to other members of the group and worked together towards a common goal similar to a community. Through their interactions, they learned to compromise, which helped to facilitate the teamwork.

Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews as barriers to learning. The themes related to student relationships and group activity. Poor interpersonal skills affected the social interactions among students. Behavior traits, such as aggression, disrespect, and not compromising became barriers to learning for two students. Too much student interaction and being rushed to complete the assigned task also became barriers to course content learning. Confusion about directions during a group activity created a barrier for one student’s learning.

Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding the objectives measuring professional development. These themes related to role development and interpersonal relationship skills. Students saw their group member in different roles during the implementation
of the teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Some students demonstrated they were better in different roles, such as educator, counselor, and advocator.

Interpersonally, students learned to tolerate others’ differences and work together as a team. Working with others helped the students develop a sense of collegiality, which is an important aspect of professional development.

One theme emerged from students’ interviews as a barrier to professional development. The theme related to ineffective group activities. Some students did not believe their professional development was promoted through some of the group activities.
Chapter 6: “The Culturally Sensitive”

Findings

“The Culturally Sensitive” consisted of seven students. All seven students agreed to participate in interviews. The group members consisted of two White males, two Black females, and three White females. Their ages ranged from 20 to 26 years old. Carl, a 21-year-old single White male, still lives with his parents and younger brother. James, a 22-year-old single White male, lives with his divorced mother and younger sister. Nancy, a 21-year-old single Black female, lives with her paternal grandparents. Sally, a 21-year-old single Black female, lives with her parents and younger brother. Tammy, a 20-year-old single White female, lives with her parents and one sister. She refers to herself as the “youngun” of the group. Betty, a 23-year-old single White female, lives with her boyfriend. Susie, a 26-year-old single White female, lives with her parents and one daughter. Students in this group became aware of their own cultural values and how other students received these values. Based on observations and interviews, I metaphorically labeled this group “The Culturally Sensitive”.

Social Interactions

Course Content Learning

A choice matrix representing who chose whom in relation to which students influenced learning of the course content was developed. See Table 6.1. Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Betty and Nancy were the top two students who influenced group members’ learning of the course content. James and Tammy moderately influenced students’ learning of the course content. Carl, Susie, and Sally had minimal influence on students’ learning of the course content.
Table 6.1
Sociomatrix from “The Culturally Sensitive”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Tammy</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected by students in the rows as the one who most helped the group members learn the course content. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their learning of the course content. According to Kerlinger (1986), the total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who helped others learn the course content.

Another way of analyzing which students influenced the group’s learning of the course content is a sociogram or directed graph. In this sociogram, students’ learning was influenced primarily by Nancy. See Figure 6.1.

Based on this diagram, one clique formed in this group. There were three mutual choices: Nancy and Sally, Nancy and James, and Nancy and Betty. Nancy formed the center of the interactional patterns in this group, influencing course content learning, followed by Betty and James with one mutual choice. Tammy, Susie, and Carl were one-way choices indicating they had the least influence on students’ learning of the course content.
Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, the choice status of the members of the group was computed. See Table 6.2.

### Table 6.2

**Choice Status of “The Culturally Sensitive” With Influence on Learning as Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Choice Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Betty and Nancy followed by James were chosen more frequently than Carl, Tammy, Sally, and Susie. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interactions patterns in a group. Using the number of mutual pairs, which in this group was three, the group cohesiveness was
computed. The group cohesiveness was computed as $3/((3 \times 7)/2) = .29$ indicating a low degree of cohesiveness.

**Professional Development**

In this choice matrix, I analyzed which students promoted professional development based on students’ choices. See Table 6.3.

### Table 6.3
**Sociomatrix from “The Culturally Sensitive” With Professional Development as Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Tammy</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data in the columns represent students who have been selected by the students in the rows as the one who most influenced professional development. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their professional development. The total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who influenced professional development.

Analysis of this matrix indicated Betty had the most influence on the students’ professional development. James, Tammy, and Nancy had a moderate degree of influence on students’ professional development. Sally had a minimum degree of influence on students’ professional development. Carl and Susie had no influence on students’ professional development.
A directed graph depicted the following interactions. See Figure 6.2.

![Directed Graph]

**Figure 6.2**
*Sociogram of “The Culturally Sensitive” With Professional Development as Criterion Variable*

In this directed graph, Nancy was the center of choices with three mutual choices. Three mutual choices centered around Nancy: Nancy and Betty, James and Nancy, and Nancy and Sally. These mutual choices became a clique. Betty had one mutual choice with Nancy followed by four students who selected Betty as the one who promoted professional development. Three group members selected James. Two group members selected Tammy. Sally was selected by one group member indicating that she had minimal influence on promoting professional development. Group members did not select Carl or Susie indicating they had the least influence on professional development. The choice status of each person in the group was computed next. See Table 6.4.

I then computed the group cohesiveness. Again, with three mutual pair choices, the group cohesiveness computed as $3/((3 \times 7)/2) = .29$ indicating a low degree of group cohesiveness.
Table 6.4
Choice Status of “The Culturally Sensitive”
With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Choice Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Betty was chosen as the one who influenced professional development. James, Nancy, and Tammy had the second highest indicating some degree of influence on professional development. Carl and Susie had no influence on professional development. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Analysis

While the group cohesiveness was low, one clique formed influencing students’ learning of the course content. Nancy was the center of the clique. Betty and Nancy had higher choice status scores than the rest of the students, followed by James with the second highest choice status score. This indicated that they were most often chosen, or were the most preferred, group members to help the others learn the course content. Tammy, Carl, Sally, and Susie had the least influence on students’ learning of the course content.

The group cohesiveness score for professional development was also low. Based on choice status scores, Betty had the most influence on professional development, yet, one clique formed with Nancy as the center. Nancy influenced both course content learning and
professional development. James and Tammy had moderate influence on professional development. Sally had minimal influence on professional development, whereas, Carl and Susie had no influence on professional development.

**Course Content Learning**

In this section, I discuss how students learned the course content using the course objectives and group activities as guides. I also discuss how students’ interactions impeded their learning of the course content.

**Objective #1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication from borrowed theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals, families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health.**

In order to understand this objective, the teacher instructed the students to develop a gumbo recipe. Each group then had to present to the class the ingredients they would have placed in a gumbo. When asked if they met objective 1 through the group activity, four students told me they did. Three students told me they did not.

Students’ learned the content of this objective various ways. For example, Sally and Tammy believed sharing information allowed the students to understand the concept of community health theories and cultural values from different perspectives. Sally said,

A lot of times whenever you have group work, you can have somebody else bring things up about the subject you are talking about that you would have never thought of. It’s good to have other people’s perspective on the matter….So, it helps me learn different aspects of what we are talking about.

Tammy added,

It is a lot easier for me to learn and stuff hearing other people’s why they think that way because even though a theory is set one way in the book, hearing how everybody views it kinda helps me see “well, this is what it is.”
During the group activity, Nancy took the lead of the group by saying, “We are making a Black man’s gumbo, not a White man’s.” Tammy went on to add how the social interactions of group members influenced her learning of the course content, especially cultural values.

With Nancy, it was an eye opener, but she had feelings of racism towards me in general, you know, what we were talking about at the time. And it is like that was a cultural differences that we had been talking about, you know. You have to be aware of those and if you are confronted with a negative attitude like that—you have to try and just over look it—just get around it somehow. So, that really helped.

Carl and James believed the group activity clarified the concept of theories. Carl stated, “I learned the content; I liked how Mrs. Groves presented it using something else and bringing it all back to us…I learned that.” James added,

It helped me understand the structure of a theory. That activity did. We already kinda knew the way a theory was set up. We understood the theory, but we didn’t understand some of the other theories. I felt that it helped me understand a theory…it did help to give structure to the group; it helped clarify it a little more.

For some students, the group activity did not help them achieve the course objectives. Nancy and Betty believed they learned the content primarily from the teacher, not the group activity. Nancy said, “I don’t think it influenced it at all. If anything, I got more from Mrs. Groves than everybody. Because, she always gave us feedback on things we didn’t know.” Betty added, “The only thing I can remember about theory is Mrs. Groves’ lecture. As far as theories goes, I don’t think I learned it in group.”

Susie thinks she learns better through independent work instead of group work. When asked if she learned the course content for this objective, she replied, “I can’t remember. I like videos because I guess that is independent pretty much—because you are going to have to focus on it yourself. I can retain better information.”
Some students gained a better understanding of community health theories through this group activity. Some students gained a better understanding of cultural values rather than community health theories through this group activity. Two students did not believe they gained knowledge of community health theories through this group activity. They gained knowledge of this objective through the teacher’s lecture.

Objective # 2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher gave each group a handout with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house. Each group was assigned a different developmental age to discuss how they would respond to the situation. When asked if they met objective 2 through this group activity, five students told me they did. Two students told me they did not.

Carl, James, and Tammy claimed they gained more knowledge of developmental stages when group members would share personal experiences. For example, Susie had a small child. She shared many of her own personal experiences of her child’s growth and development. Carl commented,

I could learn personally from them, how they might view a different thing from how I would view something. And some of them had younger kids, I mean, not kids but younger brothers and sisters, you know. They would talk about the stages they were going through, developmentally and stuff. I learned hands-on type stuff, not like reading it out of a book. It’s people talking. I find that helps a lot. It makes things stick in your head more. Like when I’m taking a test and instead of reading so and so, “How many children do this when they are at this age?” If I had an example of people talking, I remember that better than just reading it. It just sticks in my head better.

Nancy agreed with Carl. “I guess I just remember, ‘Well, I remember this because Susie said this,’ or ‘That was James’ question and that was what he had.’ That’s how I remember things.”
Tammy gained knowledge about parenting techniques when Susie shared her personal stories about her child.

I can see how the people would view the developmental things like, um, time-out for punishment and stuff. I never had that. I don’t believe in time-out; I’m a firm believer in spanking, not beating, but spanking. I was spanked and I turned out fine, I think. You know, it is good to see the different things with the developmental theories and like why you should do with your child and why you shouldn’t do this to your child.

James believed when group members shared their personal experiences, this helped him gain knowledge about the developmental needs of children and families.

That helped a lot. Those little activities about children, infants, and different things that they need—different immunizations, different developmental milestones. That helped me a lot. And the families, like the dirty house thing we did—that helped me with families’ needs. And in the community—we did groups. I learned things about stressors affecting African-American groups.

Working together and sharing knowledge helped Sallie gain knowledge of objective 2.

When we had an assignment to do, we would break it up and discuss it together. Like two of us would break—like they would take the book and look up the answers and then after each individual person would do that—then we would talk about it together and discuss how we were going to tell the other groups about it.

Two students denied the group activity helped them gain knowledge of objective 2. Betty claimed lack of feedback from group members and not enough time to finish assignments interfered with her learning.

They didn’t give any feedback and then again, I think it was because we didn’t have much time. It we had time to sit and discuss things, I think we could have learned more about each other, to apply things like that. But, then we just didn’t have time.

Susie could not remember if learning of the course content took place during the group activity.

Most of the students gained knowledge of how families cope with stress by sharing their own personal experiences. Although most of the students achieved this objective through the
group activity, one student claimed lack of feedback from students and time constraints impeded her learning through this group activity.

Objective # 3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher assigned each group a worksheet with different scenarios. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process. When asked if they met objective 3 through this group activity, six students voiced they gained confidence in communication skills, understanding of the nursing process, and the ability to make decisions independently by interacting with students in their group. For example, Betty realized she would have to communicate with a group member that she did not like personally. “I would have to say I did learn. Because we had to communicate even if you didn’t like the person, you know.” She acknowledged group members’ brain-stormed ideas in order to complete the assignment, which also influenced her decision-making skills and understanding of the nursing process.

As far as that goes, I think there was a lot of independent decision making, you know. Because you have to decide on things like that. And communication---we did communicate, even when it was fast and crazy. The nursing process---we went over it. So, we better understood that by listening to each other and whether it was right or wrong.

James saw the added benefit this group activity had on his communication skills, independent decision making skills, and understanding of the nursing process.

Assessing and reading the little scenarios in group and talking about them amongst ourselves about what we thought about assessing, setting goals, and what we thought was important as a group. Then implementing, setting up interventions and stuff like that. It helped my independent decision making because they would say something and I would say, ‘yeah, I can see your point real well’ or ‘I don’t agree. I think it might be more important.’ We would bounce back and forth and discuss it. It definitely helped my decision-making skills; I could definitely see how that would help me in the future, while I’m working with other health care professionals. So, in that sense, when you are talking with the teacher---it’s like talking with a boss; when you are talking with your peers—it
is like when you are in the real world. They are going to be your peers. And talking with
them kinda helps to develop your attitude and the way you are going to handle yourself
when you get into a situation. You are always going to act different when you are talking
to a teacher than when you are talking to peers. And the group helped me---it is a good
chance to assess your communication skills between other students because that is going
to affect when you get out. And if you are having a problem with it or maybe you are not
communicating affectively—then maybe, you can say ‘that’s not a good skill to have—
you might need to work on that before you graduate. It might be a problem in the future.’
They might tell me ‘well, you are a little overbearing—you might want to work on that.’
So, the groups did help me work on that.

Nancy gained knowledge of objective 3 when she, too, was able to brain-storm with other
group members. “Like me and James, and Sally critiqued each other on everything. It really
helped. Because I would help James and he would help me. Everybody got feedback from each
other.”

Tammy gained knowledge of objective 3 from her group members through feedback.

Since we divide up the questions we all have to independently answer; so that is like
making an independent decision on your answer and why you made that answer and
whenever you are confronted by the group with ‘why did you do that?’ You have to tell
them ‘I looked at this, this, and this.’ That is what I would view as decision making and
stuff like that. And like the nursing process and all that---we have to look at each
individual aspect like assessment of the child—then you determine how to deal with the
child’s actions and all that. We had to assess each other and learn to deal with each other.
…I think for the nursing process, like the assessment and getting feedback and stuff---
that really helped.

Carl believed he learned a different style of communicating by watching other group
members communicate with each other while developing care plans utilizing the nursing process.

Communication-wise, sometimes, people had different ways of communicating than I
did. Going back to Natalie, instead of just saying ‘That’s wrong—we aren’t doing that.’ I
wouldn’t do that to anybody. I would say, ‘Well, let’s decide on---since we are a group,
we kinda want everybody’s opinion.’

Susie gained more understanding of the nursing process by working on the activity sheets
with other group members.
I guess with a lot of activity sheets and everything, I learned. Sometimes, I forget what order we are suppose to go in for the nursing process---so they are like---this goes first, then this, then this, you know. So, I’m like ‘oh, okay.’ Just reinforcing the, I guess, the order. All the steps of the nursing process---because I tend to forget one. So, they are like, ‘no, you gotta do this.’ So, they reinforce it for me.

Sally believed the group did not help her gain knowledge about nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making.

The students in my group did not influence my learning about that [nursing process]. I prefer to learn on my own stuff. Like this I learn better. If it is something that I can read in the book and then get a good gist of whatever the book is saying, I can do it. Other things if I have no clue what I’m talking about, then that is when the group can help me. But this, I’ve heard it so many times, I pretty much handle it.

Most of the students believed the group activity helped them gain confidence in their communication skills and their ability to make independent decisions. They gained knowledge of how to use the nursing process in developing a care plan. One student claimed she had sufficient knowledge of the nursing process and did not need the group members’ feedback.

Objective # 4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students were given individual assignments to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Additional assignments included worksheets in which students had to develop nursing care plans. When asked if they met objective 4 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Carl and Susie believed working in the group helped strengthen their critical thinking skills. Carl was appreciative to receive group feedback.

I like the people in the group because if I didn’t know what I should do---you know, if stuff wasn’t coming to me that I should know or whatever, I could ask them. Or if I didn’t understand something—I could ask them. I use critical thinking a lot.
Susie agreed with Carl. She admitted she struggles with critical thinking and developing nursing care plans.

Critical thinking is something that I struggle with. So, I mean if...sometimes if I say something----they are like ‘no, now think about it.’ And then I’m like ‘oh, okay.’ So, they kinda like reinforce. I guess it is more so with Betty. Because she’s like, she’ll tell me something like ‘now, why would you want to do this before this?’ And then that shows where I’m not really thinking, you know. I need to put more thinking in. So, it helps with that part.

James believed working with the group members helped him to prioritize problems, which strengthened his critical thinking skills. “Yeah, it helps you because you have to think what is the number one most important thing issue in this paragraph.” Tammy agreed working with the group members strengthened her critical thinking skills.

For, uh, for the project we did with the teen mothers---while we were in there they would give us a situation, like “my baby is doing this.” We had to think out all the different reasons their baby could be doing that, you know. The different developmental issues pulling in all what they could be learning; what the parents could be doing at the time to make the baby do that. We had to actually put all that together and then tell them the answer from what we’ve been teaching, you know, from what we’ve gather from our information. Like mine was on development and stuff. And, they’d ask me about teething. Like, I know barely anything about teething. I don’t have a baby or anything. I’m like “well, they will drool,” you know….Like having to just pull stuff out of---“well, I remember this. I remember a little bit of this.”

Nancy demonstrated use of her critical thinking skills when she had to develop a nursing care plan without prior knowledge of the content.

When Mrs. Cosby made us do the mortality and the morbidity—it wasn’t really hard. But, it was a chapter that we had to read and look up the facts ourselves. Then one time, she gave us two scenarios and we had to come up with a care plan about that. That was kinda of critical, because she hadn’t given us that much information.

Students viewed accountability in various ways. Carl, Nancy, and Susie believed they were being accountable to the group members because they showed up for class and participated in completing assigned task even if they did not have their textbook.
Carl said,

One day, I remember, like we didn’t all have our books with us. But everybody was open to like “well, um you do this one and when you get through, I’ll use your book.” Instead of putting it all on the couple of people who had their books, everybody wanted to participate; they wanted to interact with the group---so I like that.

Nancy added,

We never had a problem with our group not having---not having things or somebody not being accountable for---you know, if we have an assignment with twenty questions and somebody says, ‘I’ll take one through five.’ We never really had that problem. I mean sometimes, if you’re done with your questions and somebody is having problems finding their answer---you help out. But, everybody pulls their own load.

Susie believed her presence was important to the group to meet the assignments used to achieve objective 4.

Well, just knowing that when I’m absent from group assignments or group projects---it can affect the group---just my absences. And so, they pretty much count on everyone to be there. We count on everybody to be there for participation.

James agreed with Susie. “Accountability is if you miss it and it is important. You have to be accountable for getting the information.”

Tammy viewed accountability as being able to communicate effectively with group members during the group activities used to achieve objective 4.

You have to be accountable for what you said in the group, you know. That day that me and Nancy---it was over the gumbo recipe of all things---she had just said “Well, that’s the difference between black people and white people’s gumbo.” I just said, “Hey, I didn’t know there was a difference. All I know is that there is gumbo.” I just couldn’t come out and say, “Well, look.” I couldn’t be rude to her because it could cause problems for me later on if I did that, you know. So that, to me, would cover accountability.

Carl believed one barrier to learning included being rushed to complete an assignment.

He expressed he needed more time to think critically about an assignment.

I mean, I can think of things fast, but for me to think things out to present it how I want it to be presented or how the group wants to be---then I think I need more time to do that. It is time consuming for me, too, to take time out to think critically. I need time, you know.
Betty claimed the class helped her strengthen her critical thinking skills, not the group. “I think as a class, it is just the class itself that taught us critical thinking. I don’t know as a group if it taught us critical thinking.”

Sally did not think the class or the group influenced her critical thinking skills. “As far as influencing my critical thinking—no, they didn’t help me with that….Accountability for nursing decisions and ethical/legal parameters---I hate to say this, but they didn’t help me with that either.”

Most of the students in this group believed their critical thinking skills were enhanced through the group activities. One student believed the class, not the group helped to strengthen her critical thinking skills. Another student did not think the class or the group helped her strengthen her critical thinking skills.

Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice.

The teacher assigned scenarios about the incidence of diseases among different age groups. Using their research skills, students had to critique and analyze the vital statistics found in articles and apply this information to the scenario. When asked if they met objective 5 through this group activity, six students told me they did. One student claimed she did not gain knowledge of objective 5 from this group activity.

Students believed structuring the group in order to complete the assigned task, and how they shared their knowledge influenced their learning of objective 5. For example, James said, "It helped us. We did that activity about an infection rate or a disease rate in our state. We learned how to look at the charts. We divided it up to figure it out. Then we showed each other how to do it because we were basically handed the packet and said, ‘figure it out.’ So, we kinda each drew off of what everybody else knew about stuff. One would look it up in the book; another one would say, ‘well, I remember how to do this’ and ‘I know
how to do this.’ Then we would put it all together and we would be able to answer questions.

Carl agreed, “And as time went on—it got smooth. Like, the first group we were saying ‘what are we doing?’ We got it done. By the end, it was like clockwork.”

Susie, Sally, and Tammy believed by sharing knowledge, they were able to achieve objective 5. Susie explained,

Critiquing is something I hate to do. I really do, because, I don’t know—it is such an indepth thing. I feel that I don’t ever do a good enough job. And if somebody can help me break it down even further, then it helps all the time. So, it helps me a lot.

Sally added,

I remember the little activity we had to do. To me, figuring out mathematics and having to figure out statistics is always a little difficult for me. I don’t know where to get the numbers or where to look at it or what to do with the numbers once I have them. So, some of them are really big. I guess with being in a group and seeing how they did it kinda helped me to understand. I guess taking it step by step instead of just flying through it. Each person kinda put in their effort to do a little bit and do the research and look at it and seeing what were the numbers. Everybody participated in it and kinda explained it….There are some things that they explain that I don’t understand.

Tammy agreed.

We just had to go with each other’s opinions….It is just that we are relying on each other to see their views; what they were looking at, how the angles there were looking at; so we would know. So, we had to be able to compare with each other. We all helped each other to compare the different studies.

Nancy believed her learning of objective 5 came from being motivated to complete the assignment. She went on to explain further,

If you did it individually, you have a choice not to do it or not. But, if the teacher puts you in a group—it means you have to learn it regardless. Anyway, it does help because, some people like me will just procrastinate and put it off. But, if you are in a group, you’ll do—you won’t have a choice.

Betty denied students shared their knowledge, therefore, her learning was compromised. She claimed, “It didn’t help me learn how to critique research articles. Because some of them, they
don’t give feedback. The ones that are laid back---they just don’t participate. So, when it came to
that, I think that was an independent experience.”

Most of the students achieved objective 5 through sharing of their knowledge about
research. Again, one student felt her learning was impaired because of lack of student feedback.

In conclusion, students gained an understanding of the course objectives by sharing
personal experiences and knowledge obtained from previous courses. Some students became
aware of cultural differences and the impact it had on their learning. Communication skills and
being accountable for the nursing decisions helped students achieve the course objectives.

At times, the group activities did not help the students achieve the course objectives.
Lectures and independent work were more effective teaching strategies for some students to
enhance their learning. Time limits on completing group tasks and poor participation of group
members were also barriers to learning of the course content.

Analysis

Students acknowledge ways in which social interactions created learning and ways in
which social interactions impeded their learning. Table 6.5 illustrates the group processes, which
enhanced students’ learning of the course content.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes
emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to shared knowledge, and the second theme
related to group structure.

Students learned the course content by sharing their personal and cultural experiences, as
well as their knowledge from previous courses. The students’ brain-stormed solutions to
problems, prioritized problems, and provided feedback to solutions for problems. These
characteristics strengthened students’ critical thinking skills and communication skills. Some students achieved all five of the course objectives.

Structurally, the students verbalized the importance of class attendance, and participation. Most students believed they were an integral part of the each other’s learning. For one student, being part of a group became a motivating factor to learn the course content. Some students achieved objectives 2, 4, and 5.

Table 6.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Tammy</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clarified information</td>
<td>Clarified information</td>
<td>Shared knowledge; expanded culturally knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Working together; shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brain-storming</td>
<td>Inc. communication skills</td>
<td>Brain-storming</td>
<td>Brain-storming</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feedback; accountable to group</td>
<td>Prioritize problems</td>
<td>Attends class; strengthen critical thinking skills</td>
<td>Strengthen critical thinking and communication skills</td>
<td>Attends class; feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Structure of group</td>
<td>Shared knowledge; structure of group</td>
<td>Provided motivation</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which enhanced students’ learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Table 6.6 illustrates the group processes impeding students’ learning of the course content.
Table 6.6
Characteristics from “The Culturally Sensitive”
With Impediments of Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learned from teacher; not group members</td>
<td>Learned from teacher; not group members</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learns through independent work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of feedback; not enough time to discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not gain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not gain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class members helped; not group members</td>
<td>Felt rushed to complete task</td>
<td>Did not help critical thinking skills or accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which impeded students’ learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to ineffective group activity, and the second theme related to lack of student involvement.

The group activities did not help the some of the students gain knowledge of the course objectives. Lack of time to complete the activity produced stress for the students. Two students believed their learning was compromised because they had to rush to complete the assignment and did not have an opportunity to dialogue with each other. Two students believed their learning came primarily from the teacher and not the group members. Some students were not able to achieve objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Lack of student involvement became an obstacle for some students to learn the course content. When students failed to share their knowledge through feedback, learning of the
objectives was compromised. Some students were not able to achieve objectives 2 and 5 due to lack of student involvement.

**Professional Development**

In this section, I discuss how students’ interactions within the group promoted or impeded professional development. I use the course objectives and group activities as a guide to analyze if these interactions promoted or impeded their professional development.

**Objective # 6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system.**

The teacher gave each group a newspaper. She instructed the group to identify an article about a public health issue and share it with the class. The goal of this group activity was to help students understand the role of the community health nurse in relation to the United States health care delivery system. When asked if they met objective 6 through the group activity, four students told me they did. Three students told me they did not.

James explained, “We did an activity where we looked up certain organizations. We looked at what their roles were and how they worked together in community health---their branches and things. We used the group to help us learn about that.” Carl enjoyed the way the group members worked together to complete the group activity. It made learning about the historical development easier.

I like group work. I mean, it seems like it goes smoother to me and with the history, it was pretty much like the same thing as all the other ones. We split it up, did our own thing, and trusted each person with what they were going to say.

Sally agreed with Carl. She had a strong adversion to learning history. However, working with the group members helped her learn about the historical development of the health care delivery system.
I would have to say that they helped because I hate history in any way, shape, or form. I hate history. I know for this particular thing, I would not have tried to learn it on my own. So, everything I would have learned it would have come from them. Because I hate history so much that I would not crack open a history book in school any chance I had—I wouldn’t do it. So, they would have helped me the whole time for that.

Tammy gained knowledge of the health care delivery system through the sharing of personal experiences and knowledge of her group members.

But, James, he has family in the health care profession….He seems to understand most of the bureaucracy and the health care plans more than I would. Because he would say, ‘oh, I have one of these at home,’ like the literature, the teacher would give us. So, he really helped identify the different things between---I mean I know the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, but the different HMOs and how they practiced, you know, at the different levels. Even with the bureaucracies, how it goes up in the level of command in a hospital because he works in a hospital and I don’t. So, it is really neat to see his input on it….Betty said just the other day, they were doing this at the hospital and already, we are doing something else because she works at the hospital. I think that is neat seeing how they are already interacting with the changes in the system---something I haven’t gone through yet.

Betty, Nancy, and Susie voiced the group activity did not help them gain knowledge of the United States health care delivery system. Betty and Nancy claimed the teachers’ lecture helped them understand the organizational structure of the health care delivery system, not the social interactions between group members. Susie could not remember the activity. She admitted she did not participate in the group activity because she was absent from class.

Some students gained a better understanding of the historical development of community health nursing by working on the group activity together. One student gained a better understanding of the health care delivery system when other group members shared their personal experiences. The teacher’s lecture helped them understand the historical development of community health nursing rather than the group activity.
Objective #7: Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The students were given individual assignments to implement a teaching plan they had developed for unwed teenage mothers. When asked if they met objective 7 through the group activity, seven students told me they did. Betty enjoyed the assignment because of the sharing of knowledge.

Well, that was good. Because if you forgot something, the others would come in. I think that we all interacted with each other’s presentation which it wasn’t like a take over thing. It was a sharing. I don’t think anybody viewed it as a take over. We were all participating. So, we really worked well and it got a lot of good interaction with us being so open with everything like that. It was good. I like it.

Carl’s image as a professional nurse was enhanced through this group activity.

It made me feel really good that I got to help people…That was probably my favorite group experience—hands on. Once I got there and I saw people talking, I learned that we know a lot of stuff---that a lot of people don’t know.

He went on further and commented on how he viewed the way the group members presented their teaching plans.

Different people had their different ways of presenting it. Some people had a lot of stuff going on—a lot of charts, stuff like that. Some people just got up there and just talked. Some people were animated. It showed me that no one way is the right way. Cause each person did it a little different---but it seemed that everybody did a good job. Everybody got their point across what they wanted to say, and said it in a way that everybody wanted to know---just different people do it in different ways.

Sally agreed with Carl. Her professional development was enhanced when she observed how her group members interacted with the unwed teenage mothers. Students’ interactions with the teenage mothers modeled the different roles of the community health nurse.

I did see a lot of teaching done cause that was what we were suppose to do is teach. I saw a lot of advocator. Myself, I was a caregiver. I saw a lot of them actually being
caregivers—telling the parents how to do certain things. And a lot of them were helping out the caregiver roles of the parents—holding the babies, changing the diapers, and how to feed them. So, that was a lot of that.

Nancy and Susie were impressed with how prepared the group members were to teach the unwed teenage mothers. Nancy commented,

Everybody, just about everybody in my group spent quite a bit of time on their teaching plan….Everybody was prepared. I think, that shows professionalism right there. Because, you don’t get up, you know, and say whatever you want and not be prepared.

Susie added,

We were all calm, relaxed, you know. You know being organized and knowing your information and knowing what you gotta do—organization probably is the one thing I think of when I think about being professional. It’s better to be organized than disorganized.

Tammy learned the importance of being open-minded with individuals who have different cultural values or are from different religions. She explained how developing a variety of therapeutic interventions for the unwed teenage mothers enhanced her awareness of diversity.

Yeah, I knew that there was going to be, um, since I’m a real Catholic and everything—we’ve always been taught no sex before marriage—none of this or that. I had to deal with that because I’m going to talk to young girls who have had kids and they are not even graduated yet. I can’t show them, that to me, that is not something you do. Because that would be wrong towards them just to go in there so negative. So, I had to develop my teaching around—there will probably be minorities in there—there will be Caucasians, you know—people of my status, lower or higher than me. I had to look at that and develop the teaching plan around what they would know like just assuming that they have been in the 9th grade…I think I was very open to them instead of being so close-minded like I thought I would be.

James believed his communication skills were improved because of the group activity. He discussed his topic with his group members to obtain feedback, which enhanced his presentation.

It helped us develop our skills to communicate with those people. And how to bring it down to their level. We had to discuss that in our group, by how are we going to talk about this to teenage girls so they can understand…We had to discuss how to bring down
to their level. But, then, we had to approach them instead of talking down to them in terms that don’t offend them. Like I had the topic about relationships. Mine was socialization—building relationships in the family…I asked my group what different angle could I take to be able to present this without stepping on anybody’s toes. They helped me with that. They also helped me with learning—not interventions for them—but for us on how much we need to be prepared for experiences like that. As a group, we made sure we were prepared.

Students gained an understanding of the professional role of the community health nurse after the presentation of their teaching plans. When students shared their knowledge with each other and the group of unwed teenage mothers, their professional images were enhanced.

**Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community-based settings.**

The teacher used the teaching plan as a way to introduce the students to the role of the community health nurse. Inviting guest speakers to address the professional role of the nurse in a community based setting was another teaching strategy used to achieve this objective. When asked if they met objective 8 through the group activity, seven students told me they did. Betty saw the importance of communication and working with others who are different while participating in the group activity.

We were not all experienced in the areas that we taught. But, we gave feedback in each others’ experiences. Not necessarily as a class, but as a group both in clinical experiences and things like that. As far as roles go, we did communicate better. I learned that you have to be flexible. The group members are just like the people we have to take care of. They all have different personalities. You are not going to click with some of your patients. But you are gonna have to learn to make ways to communicate to be comfortable with each other. I think it helped.

Tammy believed the social interactions between herself and the group members influenced her understanding of the professional role of the community health nurse.

With the roles of the community health nurse, I mean going into the different community settings—it was easier for me to get to know people in the different settings because I had known someone in my group who was from somewhere like that or in that situation. And
knowing how they, like felt on it already from talking in the group. So, that was a lot easier for me to get through.

Carl saw the different roles of the community health nurse through the interactions of the group members. He explained how these interactions promoted his professional development.

In being around the others, that helped me learn like to become strong---like the nurturing type. Some people may have better skills at one thing than another role, which they can use later on with the type of nursing that they want to do. I can kinda tell what kinda nurse the people is going to be, like more ways than one. Like, someone might be more of an advocate---like tell the people what to do, type of nurse. The more nurturing people in the group---stuff like that. It has just basically shown me a variety of people; just their different ways of doing things. That no one way is right, you know.

James, Nancy, and Sally believed the group members became role models for the unwed teenage mothers. James explained,

Yeah, role modeling. That was what we were doing. We were like holding the babies and teaching them and just showing them that we care for them. We know how hard it is for them to take care of these babies. We helped change them and stuff like that. I got actively involved in their care.

Sally added,

I would say whenever they would do that you would see how they would perform certain things that the teacher would do and how the caregiver would do. It helped me understand ‘okay, that’s how they do that.’ And ‘that’s how it should be done.’

Susie’s professional image was enhanced. “It did make me feel good. It made me feel good that I could teach someone something that I learned from school.”

In conclusion, students gained an understanding of the roles of a community health nurse through the implementation of their teaching plans. Students worked together and shared their knowledge while developing the teaching plans. Some students believed their images as a professional nurse were enhanced through the group activities.
Analysis

Students described ways in which their social interactions promoted their professional development and ways it impeded their professional development. Table 6.7 illustrates the group processes, which promoted professional development, as described by the students.

Table 6.7
Characteristics from “The Culturally Sensitive”
Promoting Professional Development as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Tammy</th>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Prof. image enhanced</td>
<td>Increased comm. skills</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Prof. image enhanced</td>
<td>Organized and prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Increased comm. skills; working together</td>
<td>Aware of different roles of community health nurse</td>
<td>Prof. image enhanced</td>
<td>Prof. image enhanced</td>
<td>Aware of different roles of community health nurse</td>
<td>Prof. image enhanced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which promoted professional development, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to role development and shared knowledge.

As the students implemented their teaching plan, their professional images as a nurse were enhanced. Students felt a sense of accomplishment as they presented their teaching plan to teenage mothers. They became aware of the different roles of a community health nurse. Students became aware of how they interacted with others, which is a necessary element of professional behavior. Another important element of professionalism is being culturally tolerant. As students become aware of the culturally and religious differences of others, their interpersonal relationship skills are enhanced, thus promoting professional development. Some students achieved objectives 7 and 8 through the group activities.
Students saw the relevancy of sharing knowledge with each other and working together. Communication skills were enhanced both while the students were working together and during the presentation. Sharing of knowledge helped to also promote their professional image. Some students achieved objectives 6, 7, and 8 through the group activities.

Table 6.8 illustrated the group processes, which impeded professional development, as described by the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Susie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Learned from teacher, not group activity</td>
<td>Learned from teacher, not group activity</td>
<td>Absent from group activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes impeding Betty, Nancy, and Susie’s professional development.

Themes. One theme emerged from the interviews. The theme related to ineffective group activity. Betty and Nancy learned about the historical development of community health nursing through the teacher’s lecture, not the group activity. Susie was absent from class and missed the lecture and group activity.

Summary

The social interactions among “The Culturally Sensitive” indicated a low degree of group cohesiveness. Analysis of the sociometric indices indicated two students, Betty and Nancy, influenced students’ learning of the course content. The focus of learning centered primarily on Nancy. One clique formed around Nancy.

While the group cohesiveness indicated low cohesiveness, Betty had the most influence on the students’ professional development. However, one clique formed around Nancy as the
student who most influenced group members’ professional development. Although Betty
influenced students’ learning of the course content and professional development, sociometric
analyses indicated Nancy had the highest degree of social receptivity.

Two themes emerged from students’ interviews regarding the objectives measuring
course content learning. These themes related to shared knowledge and group structure. Students
learned the course content by sharing their personal and cultural experiences, as well as their
knowledge from previous courses. By sharing their knowledge, students strengthened their
critical thinking skills and communication skills.

Students attending class, participating in the group activities, and dividing up the tasks to
be completed formed the structure of the group. This structure provided the foundation for
learning. The students became an integral part of each other’s learning through their
participation.

Two themes emerged from students’ interviews, which were barriers to learning. The
themes related to the group activity and student participation. Some students were not able to
achieve the course objectives through the group activities. Limiting the time allowed to complete
the assigned task produced stress on students impeding their learning. At times, lecturing by the
teacher became the means for course content learning instead of group activities.

Two themes emerged from students’ interviews regarding the objectives measuring
professional development. The themes related to role development and shared knowledge.
During the implementation of the teaching plan, students gained a sense of accomplishment
resulting in the enhancement of their professional image. They also became aware of the
different roles of the community health nurse. Working together in groups as students and
teaching high-risk groups enhanced the students’ awareness of how they interacted with others.

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Cultural values among the students were tested through their social interactions. Through these interactions, students gained cultural tolerance, which is an important element of professional development. Sharing knowledge between students enhanced their ability to work together and increased their communication skills. Through these interactions, professional development was promoted.

One theme related to ineffective group activity emerged from students’ interviews as a barrier to professional development. Three students did not believe their professional development was promoted through the group activity used to achieve objective 6.
Chapter 7: “The Serious-Minded”

Findings

“The Serious-Minded” consisted of two male and five female students ranging from ages 20 to 47 years old. One female student was African-American. Sam, a 47-year-old married White male, lives approximately 75 miles north of campus. He commutes to classes every day. Peter, a 30-year-old married White male, has been a registered nurse for six years graduating from an associate degree nursing program. He is currently working towards earning a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Jessica, a 30-year-old married White female, lives with her husband and two children, ages ten and six. Debbie, a 26-year-old single White female, lives in an apartment close to campus. Linda, a 22-year-old single Black female, lives in the dorms on campus. Shawna, a 22-year-old engaged White female, lives in a townhouse off campus. Bridget, a 20-year-old single White female, lives in the dorms on campus. During the interviews, students commented on the importance of the nursing profession as a career choice. This concern prompted me to metaphorically name this group “The Serious-Minded”.

Social Interactions

Course Content Learning

The choice matrix is analyzed by studying who chose whom in relation to which students influenced learning of the course content. See Table 7.1. Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Debbie and Jessica were the two students chosen most frequently who influenced group members learning of the course content. Peter, Shawna, and Sam were the second most chosen members who influenced group members learning of the course content. Bridget and Linda had the least influence on group members learning of the course content.
Table 7.1
Sociomatrix from “The Serious-Minded”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Bridget</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Shawna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who most helped the group members learn the course content. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their learning of the course content. According to Kerlinger (1986), the total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who helped others learn the course content.

Another way of analyzing which students influenced the group’s learning of the course content is a sociogram or directed graph. In this directed graph, students, which influenced learning of the course content, centered primarily around Jessica and Debbie. See Figure 7.1.

There were no cliques formed in this group. Jessica is the only student with a mutual pair choice. Both Jessica and Debbie were chosen three times as the student who influenced learning of the course content. Sam, Shawna, and Peter were each chosen twice as the student who influenced learning of the course content. Group members did not choose Bridget and Linda as being influential in helping others learn the course content. Next, the choice status of the members of the group was computed. See Table 7.2.
Figure 7.1  
Sociogram of “The Serious-Minded”  
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

Table 7.2  
Choice Status of “The Serious-Minded”  
With Influence on Learning as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Choice Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Debbie and Jessica were chosen more frequently than the remaining group members. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.
Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interaction patterns in a group. Using the number of mutual pairs, the group cohesiveness was computed. In this group, there was only one mutual pair of choice. The group cohesiveness was computed as \( \frac{1}{((3 \times 7)/2) = .10} \) indicating a low degree of group cohesiveness.

### Professional Development

In this choice matrix, I analyzed which students promoted professional development based on students’ choices. See Table 7.3. Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Jessica was chosen most frequently as the student who influenced professional development. Linda, Peter, and Sam were the second most chosen as students who influenced professional development. Bridget, Debbie, and Shawna had the least influence on professional development.

#### Table 7.3
**Sociomatrix from “The Serious-Minded”**
**With Professional Development as Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Bridget</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Shawna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who influenced professional development. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their professional development. The total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who influenced professional development.
A directed graph depicted the following interactions. See Figure 7.2.

![Directed graph]

**Figure 7.2**  
Sociogram of “The Serious-Minded”  
With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

In this directed graph, Jessica was the center with two mutual pair choices indicating she had the most influence on professional development. Again, no clique formed within these interactions. Linda, Peter, and Sam received two choices from students in the group indicating they had moderate influence on professional development. Bridget, Debbie, and Shawna received one choice from students in the group indicating they had the least influence on professional development. A choice status of each person in the group was computed next. See Table 7.4.

I then computed the group cohesiveness based on Kerlinger’s group cohesiveness formula. With two mutual pair choices, the group cohesiveness score computed as $2/((3 \times 7)/2 = .19$ indicating a low degree of group cohesiveness.
Table 7.4
Choice Status of “The Serious-Minded”
With Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s choice status formula, Jessica was chosen as the student who most influenced professional development, followed by Linda, Peter, and Sam. Bridget, Debbie, and Shawna had the least influence on professional development. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Analysis

In this group, there was a low degree of group cohesiveness. No cliques formed between the social interactions of students while learning the course content. Debbie and Jessica were chosen as the two students who most influenced the group members’ learning of the course content, followed by Peter, Shawna, and Sam. Bridget and Linda had the least influence on group members learning of the course content.

No cliques were found among the group members when asked which students influenced professional development. The group cohesiveness score indicated a low degree of cohesiveness. Jessica had the most influence on students’ professional development, followed by Linda, Peter, and Sam. Bridget, Debbie, and Shawna had the least influence on professional development.
Overall, Jessica influenced both course content learning and professional development. Debbie had a significant influence on course content learning and the least influence on professional development. Sam and Peter had moderate influence on both course content learning and professional development. Shawna had moderate influence on course content learning and the least influence on professional development. Linda had the least influence on course content learning and a moderate influence on professional development. Bridget had the least influence on both course content learning and professional development.

Course Content Learning

In this section, I discuss how students learned the course content using the course objectives and group activities as guides. I also discuss how students’ interactions impeded their learning of the course content.

Objective # 1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication borrowed from theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals, families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health.

In order to understand this objective, the teacher instructed the students to develop a gumbo recipe. Each group then had to present to the class the ingredients they would have placed in a gumbo. When asked if they met objective 1 through the group activity, five students told me they gained knowledge about cultural values. Two students told me they did not. Bridget gained knowledge of cultural values because the group members shared a different perspective of how to make gumbo. She said,

That one, it kinda helps because you got to see different views. I mean cause I’m from way down south and we use all these things and when people said like we use certain things, you know, I wouldn’t think of it as what you would use. But, it just brought in everybody’s views. I know I participated in that cause, I knew about it.
Linda also gained knowledge of cultural values. She added,

Some had a better understanding of what was going on and they could explain it to me. I learn through students because they have the same questions that I have, sometimes. If I don’t think of the questions they would ask it and I learned from what the answer was….The group activity was interesting, even though some of my classmates put certain things in their gumbo. I was shocked. But it was interesting. I learned from it.

Shawna and Sam gained knowledge of cultural values through the group activity. Sam said,

“Yes, I learned the main thing is that everybody is different. Everybody does it different, and it all comes out good.”

Jessica’s knowledge of community health theories was enhanced through the group activity. She said, “Yes, I remember we had several activities about community health theories. And we worked as a group and did that project. It did enhance what we learned about those community health theories.”

Debbie did not remember what she learned through this group activity. She said, “I don’t remember, honestly. I remember doing the gumbo thing, but I don’t remember anything around that. So, obviously my learning wasn’t very good.” Peter expressed frustration about this group activity. He said,

I was just getting frustrated with how the group was working together….I could just see them working in the hospital together. I felt like I could picture these people making a big decision off of something they heard and not knowing it they are doing any damage to a patient, which probably wasn’t too appropriate. I was frustrated and aggravated.

Peter added, “I learned during the lecture, but not during the group activity itself.”

Most of the students gained knowledge about cultural values rather than community health theories. For the students who did not learn from this group activity, the teacher’s lecture helped to bridge the group activity with the course objective. Using the gumbo group activity as an analogy, the teacher helped the students understand the concept of theories.
Objective # 2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher gave each group a handout with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house. Each group was assigned a different developmental age to discuss how they would respond to the situation. For example, one group discussed how to intervene with the children living in the dirty house, another group discussed how to intervene with a newborn baby living in the dirty house, and another group discussed how to intervene with the mother who lived in the dirty house. When asked if they met objective 2 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Two students did not achieve objective 2 through the group activity.

During the group activity, students shared their personal experiences and knowledge about different developmental age groups. Bridget explained how sharing of personal experiences helped her understand different development stages of the elderly. She said,

I think we had an elderly one. It helped because we sat back and thought about how they would be in a similar situation. A lot of us referred back to our grandparents and like our grandma does this and we kinda took it as what our family does….So, I think we all used our own personal experience to come up with the answers.

Linda learned about developmental stages when others shared their stories about family members. “Yes, they all had different examples to give, different reasons and different stories to give. Everybody has different needs. I learned, I guess from them because they are all different from me.” Sam, also, gained knowledge of developmental stages, when group members shared stories about family members. “That was pretty good because we have one lady that has children and they talked about that. They talked about brothers and sisters, so everybody has a good input.”
Two students gained knowledge through the group activity. Debbie gained knowledge of the different needs of individuals with a different culture background. She stated, “What I remember about that is, I think it was a Hispanic. I remember that was the one we learned most about their individual needs.” Jessica gained knowledge because of the type of teaching strategy used to achieve this objective. During the group activity, students had to role-play the characters in the scenario. Jessica explained how this helped her gain knowledge of the course content.

Well, I remember one project in particular where we had a situation and we had to role play the dirty house and the families, and I think it really enhanced my learning. You know, like when you have different types of learning and not just reading or lecture, it does help with the role playing and looking up those situations in the book, or whatever other material she gave us and assignments in the book, the teacher used to enhance our learning of the course content.

Barriers to learning included being confused about the assignment and missing class. Peter admitted he did not learn the course content through the group activity because he missed class that day. Shawna was confused about the group activity. “I didn’t understand what she [the teacher] meant or where she was going with that exercise. It wasn’t until each group got up that I could put it together and I was really confused in that exercise.”

By sharing their personal experiences, most of the students gained knowledge about how families with different developmental needs cope with stress. One student missed class and did not have an opportunity to hear group members share their personal experiences. Another student was unclear about the instructions, thus her learning was impaired.

Objective #3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher assigned each group different scenarios from a worksheet. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process. When asked if they learned
objective 3 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Jessica and Linda’s communication skills and utilization of the nursing process were enhanced through this group activity. Jessica said,

On several of the assignments, we did have to come up with nursing diagnosis and go through the nursing process for some of the assignments. Also, we had to learn how to communicate with our participants in our group, so that we could finish the assignments.

Linda described how they structured the group tasks to complete the assignment of developing a care plan. Communication among students became an important element to completing the assignment. She explained,

With the nursing process, we broke it up. One might do diagnosis, another might plan, and another might implement and discuss what we are doing so that we all would help each other out. I learned that without communication we wouldn’t be able to do much especially with the nursing process. It takes communication throughout the process. I learned from the students that it is very important to be able to communicate with people and be able to make your own decisions sometimes, cause other people’s decisions aren’t always the best. If you collaborate with the other students then, eventually, you will come up with the right decision.

Debbie agreed collaboration and communication took place among the group members in order to complete the assignment. She said, “The whole group just kind of collaborated. Just making it [the assignment] more clear as what we were suppose to do, basically.” Peter observed the group members collaborating to complete the assignment. He explained what he observed,

I did see our group using the nursing process approach when they would assess the situation and discuss it and come up with a plan. They would kind of follow the nursing process. I did see that and it was more obvious towards the end of the semester. People were getting to know each other a little better and working better together and feeling comfortable discussing their points of view. I feel we were taking a more nursing type approach to problem solving.

Bridget claimed she became more creative when it came time to use the nursing process.
Barriers to learning included absent group members and distracting social interactions among group members. Shawna felt her decision-making skills were affected because group members were absent from the group activities. She commented,

I don’t even know if I learned anything. I guess that Jessica was the leader, but she wasn’t there every time. That was another thing, we weren’t always there. I can remember doing an activity with just two in the group. That affected my decision-making skills and nursing process.

Sam believed distracting social interactions among group members interfered with his understanding of the nursing process. He explained,

If we are talking about our work, that’s ok. But if they start talking about their weddings and things or I went to the Keg and got really drunk and somebody was dancing on the bar. That’s distracting, cause I want to hear that too. Well, maybe not the weddings, but maybe some of the other stuff.

Students depended on their communication skills and independent decision-making skills to develop a nursing care plan. Most of the students believed these skills were enhanced through the group activity. Two students claimed their learning was impeded because of absent group members and inappropriate conversations during the group activity.

**Objective # 4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community.**

Students in each group were given individual assignments to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Although the assignments were individual, each group had to attend the program to provide support, encouragement, and feedback. Worksheets with scenarios were also used to help students develop care plans. When asked if they met objective 4 through the group activity, five students told me they did. Two students did not achieve objective 4 through the group activity.
Bridget described how working with members of her group enhanced her critical thinking skills through sharing of their knowledge. Bridget learned to trust her group members, which influenced her learning of the course content.

I think it helped critical thinking, some of the stuff such as our research stuff. I mean not our research, our questions and stuff, they weren’t actually in the book. So, we had to kinda critically think and come up with our own answers and stuff and hopefully they were right. I think it helps to work together because you have each person coming up with their own ideas and each has to critically think. It’s not just coming out of a book….I think you have to put your trust in classmates and hopefully the teachers know what they’re talking about. Our group did pretty good on that because we had enough confidence when we went up that person was gonna present it in a good manner, and we had pretty good answers…I guess when we had to, maybe being in small groups and stuff we all kinda got together and I would like call up Debbie and ask her and we would call each other and I guess that kinda helped. But, I think it’s kinda good because you have people that have to be there at the same time as you do and you can always rely that somebody’s gonna know, hopefully.

Jessica believed her critical thinking skills improved through the group activity. She claimed,

We did have our assignments that we dealt with ethical and legal parameters of nursing and the standards of care for the individuals, families, or groups in the community. And critical thinking---the assignments were that we had to not just rely on the books and material. That we had to look at, we had to really think critically what clients would need. As far as ethical and legal, what’s ethical and what’s not and what’s the legal aspect of the standards of care or the patient’s laws that they have. Like the Patient Bill of Rights.

Jessica observed evidence of accountability among group members by their participation. She stated, “….for each assignment each member did something for that project and did show accountability and we did finish all our assignments.” Linda agreed her critical thinking skills was enhanced by working together with the group members on the group activity.

We all had to think critically in order to get our assignments done correctly. We were focusing on doing a good job, so we thought as critically as we could. We also know that we are accountable for everything, so we try to make the right decisions.

Peter believed he became more accountable to the group members because of the group activities. He said,
Yeah, we were kind of just wanting to come up with the right answer so we wouldn’t let our group down. We would try to at least have the right answer so we wouldn’t embarrass the group. We tried harder to be accountable.

Sam believed working together as a group demonstrated accountability, and helped him enhance his critical thinking skills. He explained,

I get going down the wrong path and we’ll have a discussion and it will get on track there and help me figure out I’m going the wrong way here. And sometimes, if we did something wrong, I think we all helped each other. I believe for the most part they [the group members] are accountable and they do get their stuff done.

Debbie claimed she did not learn accountability while interacting with her group members. She did not believe her critical thinking skills were enhanced because of the interactions among group members during the group activity. She said,

No, I just don’t have anything to say to these cause you know, really it didn’t help me learn….I mean, the only thing I can think of is like knowing the different things that’s in water for children.

Shawna’ critical thinking skills were affected by the absenteeism of group members. She expressed,

I don’t think we were ever all there one day….I think we just put that class aside and just tended to our other classes and we shouldn’t have done that….I remember Mrs. Cosby saying you had to be at each class this semester for it to work. And things happen, but I think that when you get out there like at the hospital, you just can’t miss work and you’ve got to be more professional about it than that.

Working together in the group activity enhanced students’ critical thinking skills. Students learned to trust their group members and demonstrated accountability by correctly answering the questions. Group members being absent affected one student’s learning. Another student did not believe the group activity enhanced her accountability to the group members or critical thinking skills.
Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice.

The teacher assigned scenarios about the incidence of diseases among different age groups. Students had to have research skills in order to critique and analyze the vital statistics found in the scenarios. When asked if they met objective 5 through the group activity, four students told me they did. Three students did not meet objective 5 through the group activity.

Debbie explained how the group helped her learn the course content.

I remember that some of the people knew where to go in the book to apply the statistics or maybe get another statistic we needed from the data we had. We had to get a mean value or something, but, at least, a couple of people knew how to get it and help everyone so we accomplished it.

Jessica agreed with Debbie. She gained knowledge of this objective through the sharing of knowledge among the group members. She stated,

Yes, being in the groups and working on those assignments as a group, I think really helped us to understand that material and helped to expose us again. It starts sinking in. Repetition….And I think that critiquing those research studies we’ve learned in other classes, the more you get exposed to, the more you remember.

Through shared knowledge, Linda was able to see the course content from different perspectives, which enhanced her learning of the course content. She explained,

Well, my relationship with them and critiquing the research was interesting because they had different, um, they saw different things about the research studies that I didn’t see. I picked up on certain things that I could relate to. They had certain things they could relate to. So, critiquing, it was interesting because we all had different things that we got in the research. The next person might have saw something different.

Sam believed working together and sharing knowledge helped him achieve the objective of critiquing research articles.

Three students’ learning was not enhanced through the group activity. Two students missed the class and the group assignment. Shawna commented, “That might have been a day I missed. I don’t remember that part.” Peter admitted, “I don’t really remember. I don’t remember
critiquing any.” Bridget was confused about the group assignment. She claimed the confusion came because the worksheet did not have all of the information to be able to apply research principles of critiquing. She stated,

I think that one was really crazy, because our papers were incomplete. I remember our group was confused, because the worksheet asked us about a disease and we didn’t have the information. That was confusing. We just kinda put numbers together and stuff.

Working together on group activities helped students understand how to critique the research article and apply it to a situation. Sharing their knowledge with each other helped students learn, also. Three students did not believe the group activity helped them understand how to critique research articles. One student commented that the worksheets were incomplete resulting in becoming a barrier to her learning. Two students missed the group activity.

In conclusion, students gained an understanding of cultural values through the group activity. They also gained knowledge of the course content when group members shared personal stories about their families. This sharing of personal experience helped the students understand developmental stages in family systems. Communication skills, accountability, and the ability to collaborate with each other helped the students achieve the course objectives.

Barriers to learning stemmed from the group activity and student involvement. At times, instructions by the teacher were unclear creating confusion during the group activity. Sometimes, the worksheets did not have the correct information available for the group to complete the assignment. Distracting behavior among students during the group activity impeded learning of the course content. Absenteeism also affected students’ learning.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which their social interactions created learning and ways in which their social interactions impeded their learning. See Table 7.5.
Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1988) constant comparative method, three themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to shared knowledge, teamwork, and group activity.

Sharing of knowledge occurred in various forms. Students shared their personal family stories to help gain knowledge of developmental stages. Students shared knowledge of research in order to complete assignments. As students shared both their personal experiences and knowledge, different perspectives were revealed, which influenced their learning of the course content. Students achieved objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Table 7.5
Characteristics from “The Serious-Minded”
With Influence on Learning as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Bridget</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Shawna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shared personal experiences</td>
<td>Group activity</td>
<td>Group activity</td>
<td>Shared personal experiences</td>
<td>Shared personal experiences</td>
<td>Shared personal experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enhanced creative skills</td>
<td>Collaboration among group members</td>
<td>Increased comm. skills</td>
<td>Increased comm. skills</td>
<td>Collaboration among group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shared knowledge; learned to trust group members</td>
<td>Critical thinking skills enhanced</td>
<td>Critical thinking skills enhanced</td>
<td>Became more accountable to group members</td>
<td>Working together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Working together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which enhanced students’ learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Elements of teamwork provided students with a structure within the group so learning could take place. As students increased their communication skills, they learned to collaborate with each other. By collaborating with each other, several students believed their critical thinking
and creative skills improved. One student learned to trust the other group members, which is an important element of teamwork. Students became more accountable to group members by completing the assignment correctly. Students achieved objectives 3, 4, and 5 through teamwork.

Two students believed the group activity as a teaching strategy enhanced their knowledge of the course content. The group activity became the starting point to their social interactions, which influenced students’ learning of the course content. Students achieved objective 2 through the group activity. The group activity enhanced students’ critical thinking skills.

Table 7.6 illustrates the group processes, which interfered with the students’ learning of the course content, as described by the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Bridget</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Shawna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Didn’t learn from group activity</td>
<td>Didn’t learn from group activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Absent from class</td>
<td></td>
<td>Was confused about assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distracting behavior from group members</td>
<td>Absent members from group activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t learn from group activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Absent members from group activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Was confused about assignment</td>
<td>Was absent from group activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Was absent from group activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent group processes, which impeded learning as described, by the students.
Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1988) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to student relationships and the second theme related to an ineffective group activity.

Being absent from class and missing group activity resulted in a lack of student interaction, which became an impediment to learning for some students. While students may have been present for the group activity, they became distracted with magazines and communication that did not relate to the group activity. Therefore, their interactions lacked appropriate behaviors to work together as a group, which impeded one student’s learning of the course content. Students did not meet objectives 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Using the group activity as a teaching strategy was not an effective tool for learning for two students. If there were not clear instructions given by the teacher about the group activity, confusion and chaos occurred, which impeded on students’ learning of the course content through the group activity. Students did not meet objectives 1, 2, 4, and 5 through the group activities.

Professional Development

In this section, I discuss how students’ interactions within the group promoted or impeded professional development. I use the course objectives and group activities as a guide to analyze if these interactions promoted or impeded students’ professional development.

Objective # 6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system.

The teacher gave each group a newspaper. She instructed the group to identify an article about a public health issue and share it with the class. The goal of this group activity was to help students understand the role of the community health nurse in relation to the United States health
care delivery system. When asked if they met objective 6 through the group activity, four students told me they did. Three students did not achieve this objective through the group activity.

Bridget explained how the group activity helped her understand the importance of community health nursing and public health issues. She said,

> It kinda helped cause you know I kinda looked up in the newspaper and you had to grab your own, you know like find each part. We had to look in the newspaper and find one of those things related. It’s kinda like you have to get an idea of how those in the community relates to that.

During the group activity, the students reached a consensus as to what article they would report to the class. Debbie gained knowledge of public health issues through the group activity. She explained,

> We just all took a page and just all saw basically which one had the best one. So, it was kind of like, why we felt it was important and like, “Ok, that one is fine or that one is better.” We just kinda collaborated and reached a consensus as to the best article.

Peter gained knowledge of the role of the community health nurse through the group activity. His understanding of community health nursing had been limited previously; therefore, the group activity achieved the goal of expanding knowledge of the professional role of the community health nurse. He stated,

> I’ve learned that there is much more to it than what I originally thought—community health nursing. I’ve helped out in the community health center before and I’ve gone to community health centers before with immunizations and stuff like that. I didn’t think too much about its importance and stuff. But there is really a lot to community health and I do see its importance. I do have a lot more understanding of community health nursing.

Linda told me she gained an understanding of the historical development of community nursing and the health care delivery system through the group activity. She said, “It made me understand it from different aspects. The historical development we all remember different
things from the classes. We had different ideas, different views on an assignment about that.

There was a sheet with different dates and stuff.”

Student relationships during the group activity became a barrier to professional development for two students. Shawna expressed the group did not function effectively on the day of this group activity. She stated,

I didn’t really like that newspaper article thing. I didn’t find…because well, that day…I don’t think we even worked together as a group that day. I think one person was like, ‘okay, I’ll do this’ and they were all talking about it and I don’t think anybody did anything. It was just a flop that day.

Sam believed his understanding of community health nursing was compromised by the negative attitude of some of the group members, especially the registered nurse in the group. He explained how this negative attitude affected his learning of the objective 6.

For some people, I just accept unconditionally, as they are the ideal of this profession of what I would like to be. But, you know, they could a role model. Their skills are probably, and I would assume, a whole lot better than mine. They are a role model in that sense. And, I’m still trying to develop a mental attitude of how I’m gonna be in this profession and how to deal with people. Then when I hear negative things from people that already work in the profession, it is frustrating. It’s not their skills, it’s their attitude towards the nursing thing. I can’t accept some of the things I would hear. I guess maybe I’m taking it too serious, maybe I’m too idealistic.

Jessica was absent from the class. She told me she did not achieve objective 6 through the group activity.

Most of the students gained understanding of the role of the community health nurse in relation to the health care delivery system. However, students’ relationships interfered with two students’ learning. Not working together well during the group activity and having a negative attitude about the profession of nursing impaired students’ understanding of the role of the community health nurse. One student was absent from this group activity.
Objective # 7: Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students were given individual assignments to implement a teaching plan they developed for unwed teenage mothers. The goal of the assignment was to enhance their ability to develop therapeutic interventions as a community health nurse. When asked if they met objective 7 through the group activity, six students told me they did. One student told me they did not achieve objective 7 through the group activity. Jessica explained how working with unwed teenage mothers helped her understand the role of the community health nurse. She said,

I feel as a group that helped us to relate to community health nursing and providing care to at risk individuals because definitely teenage moms are at risk. And I think working as a group with them, we came up with better ways of interventions and better ways to educate them to take care of their children they now have.

Teamwork occurred among the group members while developing their teaching plans. For example, although Peter had experience in teaching patients in the hospital, he had limited experience of teaching wellness interventions. He used his group members as resources to help develop his teaching plan. He explained, “For the teaching plan, I went back and used some of the other material on wellness. But, to come up with interventions, I did use them [the group] to help with my teaching plan.” Bridget developed pamphlets to distribute to the teenage mothers. By developing a pamphlet, she was able to be “creative”, and provide a variety of therapeutic interventions for her teaching plan. Linda observed teamwork among group members while developing nursing care plans. She commented, “One person was usually in charge of developing the interventions, but we all agreed on which were the best ones to use.” Shawna felt
supported by her group members while implementing the teaching plan, which helped her understand the role of the community health nurse. She stated,

That whole day, I know we all put a lot of work into that day and I think each person was prepared. I mean we did good as a group and the questions that I asked, I remember some of the group members in the group answering instead of the mothers answering. You know, it was… I think we showed a lot of support for that…. I feel like the group backed me up there for sure.

Sam agreed there was much interaction between the students and teenage mothers. He observed group members in various roles, such as educator, advocator, and caregiver. He stated, “Yeah, there was a lot of interaction. One student talked with a mother and explained some ways to take care of her baby. I guess she was being a caregiver.”

Debbie claimed she worked individually on her teaching plan and did not ask her group members for assistance. She said, “We really did that [the teaching plan] on our own and the work we did for our presentations and stuff was on our own instead of the group.” Her professional development was not enhanced through this group activity.

Most of the students gained knowledge of the role of the community health nurse through this group activity, thus promoting their professional development. One student chose not to work with the group members. Without contact with her group members, she missed an opportunity to develop her professional image through the student interactions.

Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community-based settings.

The teacher used the teaching plan as a way to introduce the students to the role of the community health nurse. When asked if they met objective 8 through the group activity, six students told me they did. One student did not feel she met this objective through the group activity. While students participated in the teaching plan, many observed students developing
their professional role. Debbie explained that working with the group members, students’
professional roles were being developed. She stated,

  Just when, like after working with them for a while in our group, we could see where
other people would be different. Like, maybe Jessica would be more of an advocator, you
know, where she would go out and promote well baby check ups. Where Shawna would
be more of just the caregiver and one would be more of the educator. You could see more
as you worked with them.

Jessica agreed with Debbie. She explained what she observed while students were presenting
their teaching plans.

  Well, definitely you could see the spectrum during our teaching plans cause we also had
to evaluate another group’s teaching plan and then do ours also. I think some of us were
better educators, were more interactive with the girls. Because with that age group, you
can’t just talk. They need to have some interaction. I think some of the students were very
good counselors. They weren’t actually good at teaching, but going over and counseling
and holding the babies and talking to the teenage mothers about their concerns. They
were really good at that. And, also, advocators. I think all of us did a pretty good job of
advocating for those teenage mothers.

Sam added, “I saw everyone as educator.” Shawna observed the different ways of developing
therapeutic interventions. She explained, “Some people had brochures, some people had to read
off it, some people talked. It was all different. Some people brought diagrams and some people
didn’t.” Bridget agreed with Shawna. She developed pamphlets because “I talk too fast” she said.

Peter, also, observed the different strategies used to provide therapeutic interventions. He said, “I
think we all had different views on how we interpret it. I know we all have our own individual
ways of thinking.”

Linda did not believe this objective promoted her professional development. She did not
observe professional roles being displayed during the presentation. She commented,

  I really didn’t see any. People in my group played the same role they play in class.
Everybody was pretty much acting the same. Sam was, well, he knew everything, so, he
pretty much didn’t ask us too many questions. Um, me and Bridget were nervous. Jessica
was calm as usual. Everyone was pretty much acting the same. Debbie, she was nervous, too.

Students who understood the roles of the community health nurse were able to distinguish these roles in the group members during the presentation of their teaching plans. By observing the group members in the different roles, students were able to see how effective these roles were with the teenage mothers. One student did not observe the group members in any professional roles during the presentations.

In conclusion, students gained an understanding of the importance of community health nursing as it impacts on the health care delivery system of the United States through the group activities. Some students gained an awareness of their role development during the implementation of the teaching plan. Some students denied they gained knowledge or the experience of developing their role as a community health nurse through the group activities.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which their social interactions promoted their professional development and ways it impeded their professional development. Table 7.7 illustrates the group processes, which promoted their professional development, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1988) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to role development and interpersonal relationships skills.

Some students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse by participating in the group activities. As they gained an understanding of the importance of the role of the community health nurse, the students began observing themselves and their group
members. Their own role development was enhanced. The students observed themselves and others in the role of educator, counselor, and advocator. Some students met objectives 6, 7, and 8 through the group activities.

**Table 7.7**  
**Characteristics from “The Serious-Minded”**  
**Promoting Professional Development as the Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obj.</th>
<th>Bridget</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Shawna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gained understanding of role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Reached consensus</td>
<td>Gained understanding of role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Importance of the role of the community health nurse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Enhanced creative side</td>
<td>Importance of community health nurse</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Observed different roles by students</td>
<td>Felt supported by group members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Developed therapeutic interventions</td>
<td>Observed different roles by students</td>
<td>Observed different roles by students</td>
<td>Observed different intervention styles</td>
<td>Observed different roles by students</td>
<td>Observed different intervention styles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The data in the columns represent group processes, which promoted professional development, as described by the students.

Interpersonally, some students’ communication skills improved. One student gained trust of the group members, which is an important element in team building. Students observed the importance of working together as a team to complete the group activities. Communication, support to group members, and working together as a team were important components of interpersonal relationship skills that promoted professional development. Some students met objectives 6, 7, and 8 through the group activities.

In Table 7.8, students described group processes, which impeded on their professional development.
Table 7.8
Characteristics from “The Serious-Minded”
Which Impeded Professional Development as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absent from group activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Did not observe roles by students; behaviors were the same in class and during presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Negative attitude about nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>Group did not function well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent group processes, which impeded on students’ professional development, as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1988) constant comparative method, one theme emerged from the interviews. The theme related to the inappropriate interpersonal relationships. Inability to work together collectively impeded professional development for two students. Displaying a negative attitude, inappropriate behaviors during the group activities, and being absent from the group activity created barriers to students’ professional development.

Summary

Social interactions among “The Serious-Minded” were rated low, according to the group cohesiveness score. No cliques formed among students who influenced course content learning. Two students were chosen most frequently, or were the most preferred who influenced students’ learning of the course content. No cliques formed among the students who influenced professional development. Most of the mutual choices centered around Jessica. Students chose Jessica as the most preferred student who influenced both course content learning and professional development.
Three themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding objectives measuring course content learning. These themes related to shared knowledge, teamwork, and group activity. Through the group activities students shared both their personal and professional experiences influencing their learning of the course content. Teamwork provided students with an infrastructure to the group activity. Elements of teamwork included communication skills, collaboration, trusting other group members, and accountability to group members. The group activity as a teaching strategy influenced students’ learning of the course content.

Themes related to student relationships and ineffective group activity impeded learning of the course content. Lack of student involvement through absenteeism impeded one student’s learning of the course content. Inappropriate behavior during the group activity distracted one student from learning the course content. Therefore, the lack of or inappropriate student behavior impeded course content learning for two students. When instructions given by the teacher were unclear to the students, then chaos and confusion erupted within the group. Thus, the group activity did not help the students achieve the course objectives.

Two themes emerged from the students’ interviews regarding objectives promoting professional development. These themes related to role development and interpersonal relationship skills. Students gained the knowledge of the importance of community health nursing through the group activities, thus promoting professional development. As students observed members from their group implementing their teaching plan to the teenage mothers, students gained an awareness of the different professional roles they were exhibiting. Their own professional roles were being developed during this group activity.
Professional development was enhanced through the elements of interpersonal relationship skills. These elements included communication skills, team building skills, and providing support to group members.

One theme, described by the students, impeded their professional development. The theme related to inappropriate interpersonal relationships. Students displayed negative attitudes about the profession of nursing, inappropriate behaviors during group activity, and a lack of teamwork, which impeded on students’ professional development.
Chapter 8: “The Commuters”

Findings

“The Commuters” consisted of seven members. Six students participated in interviews. Of these six, two were males and four females. One female was African-American. The ages ranged from 21 to 33 years old. Jim, a 33-year-old married White male, goes to school full-time and works full-time as a paramedic. Kim, a 24-year-old married White female, lives approximately seventy-five miles east of the campus. She car pools with other students from the same geographical location, and commutes to classes daily. Tess, a 22-year-old single Black female, lives on campus. Angel, a 21-year-old single White female, lives in an apartment near campus. Betsy, a 21-year-old single White female, lives with her family in a nearby state. She commutes to classes daily. Chris, a 21-year-old single White male, lives in a trailer near campus. He goes home every weekend to help his father with rice farming. While interviewing this group, I became aware of how many of these students have to travel in order to attend classes. Because of this, I metaphorically named this group “The Commuters”.

Social Interactions

Course Content Learning

One way to look at student interactions is to develop a choice matrix. In Table 8.1, the matrix represents who chose whom as helping them learn the course content. Only two students participated in this part of the study by completing their journals. Therefore, the matrix has several rows with missing data, thus limiting the ability to infer significant findings. Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Betsy was the student chosen, or most preferred, by the group members. Betsy helped the group members learn the course content.
Table 8.1
Sociomatrix from “The Commuters”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as the ones who most helped the group members learn the course content. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students whom they considered helped them learn the course content. According to Kerlinger (1986), the total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who helped others learn the course content.

Another way of analyzing which students influenced the group’s learning of the course content is a sociogram, or directed graph. In this directed graph, Tess and Betsy were the ones who most influenced students’ learning of the course content. See Figure 8.1.

Based on this sociogram, Kim had one mutual choice between herself and Tess. This indicated she and Tess helped each other learn the course content. Tess and Betsy had two one-way choices, which indicated they, too, helped students learn the course content. Angel, Chris, and Jim were chosen only once indicating they had the least influence on students’ learning of the course content. No cliques formed in this group.
Another useful tool for analyzing interactional patterns include the choice status of the person in the group. See Table 8.2.

Table 8.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice Status of “The Commuters”</th>
<th>With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Betsy was chosen more frequently than Angel, Chris, Jim, Kim, and Tess. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.

Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interaction patterns in a group. Using the number of mutual pairs, the group cohesiveness was computed. In this group, there was one
mutual pair choice. The formula for group cohesiveness was computed as $1/((1 \times 6)/2) = .11$ indicating a low degree of cohesiveness.

**Professional Development**

In this choice matrix, I analyzed which students promoted professional development based on students’ choices. Only two students participated in this part of the study by completing their journals. Therefore, the matrix has several rows with missing data, thus limiting the ability to infer significant findings. See Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3**

*Sociomatrix from “The Commuters” With Professional Development as Criterion Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The data in the columns represent students who have been selected as influencing others’ professional development. The students in the rows indicated how the students made their choices. Each student could select the top three students who most influenced their professional development. The total scores in the columns indicated social receptivity, or the number of times a student was selected as the one who influenced professional development.

Analysis of this sociomatrix indicates Chris, followed by Betsy and Jim as the top students who influenced professional development. Tess, Kim, and Angel had the least influence on students’ professional development. Next, a directed graph depicted the following interactions. See Figure 8.2.
In this directed graph, no cliques formed. Chris was selected most often as the one who promoted professional development among the students in case study E. Chris has two one-way choices, followed by Betsy and Jim with a one-way choice. The group members did not select Kim and Tess as the one who promoted professional development. There were no cliques formed among the group members. The choice status of each person in the group was computed next. See Table 8.4.

Table 8.4
Choice Status of “The Commuters”
With Influence on Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Choice Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Using Kerlinger’s (1986) choice status formula, Chris was chosen as the student who most influenced professional development, followed by Betsy and Jim. Angel, Kim, and Tess had the least influence on the students’ professional development. The maximum possible choice status score is 1.0.
Group cohesiveness is another measure of social interaction patterns in a group. There were no mutual pair choices; therefore, I was unable to compute the group cohesiveness score.

**Analysis**

No cliques formed among “The Commuters” indicating there was no central group, which influenced students’ learning of the course content. However, missing data prevented me from successfully assessing the social interactions, which influenced learning of the course content, among these students. The group cohesiveness score indicated a low degree of cohesiveness among the group members. Betsy was the most often chosen or most preferred group member to help others learn the course content, followed by Kim and Tess. Angel, Chris, and Jim had the least influence on students’ learning of the course content.

No cliques formed among the group members indicating there was no central group, which promoted professional development. However, missing data prevented me from successfully assessing the social interactions, which influenced their professional development, among these students. There were no mutual pair choices, thus the group cohesiveness score could not be computed. Chris was the most often chosen or most preferred group member to promote professional behavior, followed by Betsy and Jim. Angel, Kim, and Tess promoted professional development the least.

Betsy had the most influence on course content learning and moderate influence on professional development. Chris and Jim had the least influence on course content learning, but were significant in promoting professional development. Tess and Kim had influence on course content learning, but were not significant in promoting professional development. Angel influenced both course content learning and professional development the least.
Course Content Learning

In this section, I discuss how students learned the course content using the course objectives and group activities as guides. I also discuss how students’ interactions impeded their learning of the course content.

Objective # 1: Incorporate knowledge, cultural values, and belief patterns of communication from borrowed theories and community health concepts to promote health of individuals, families, and groups across the life span with a focus in community health.

In order to understand this objective, the teacher instructed the students to develop a gumbo recipe. The goal of this group activity was to help the students understand the concept of theories. Each group then had to present to the class the ingredients they would have placed in a gumbo. When asked if they met objective 1, three students told me they gained knowledge of community health theories and cultural values through the gumbo activity. Kim explained, “It showed how, what everybody’s background is and how their families do, the different cultures. So that was interesting.” Jim added, “Yeah, I think it helped. It gave me a new perspective on it [cultural values].” Tess described how the group activity influenced her learning cultural values.

Well, it taught me that everybody is different cause some of the things they were saying you put in a gumbo, I was thinking, ‘oh, you don’t put that in a gumbo.’ Or some things I would say, they would be like, ‘what?’ So, we had different opinions on that. It all ended up being good cause after I thought about it, I was like, maybe that would be good.

When asked if they met objective 1 through this class activity, three students told me they did not gain knowledge about cultural values and community health theories through the gumbo activity. Chris explained,

I don’t remember the point behind it. I remember the community health theories were some of the stuff we had learned before. We had learned those in nursing 312, but she [the teacher] just put it up to community health perspective.
Betsy claimed the group activity helped her learn how to make gumbo but did not enhance her knowledge of community health theories. “I learned how to make gumbo, cause I’m not Cajun or anything, so that helped me.” Betsy gained knowledge about community health theories and cultural values when the teacher lectured after the group activity. She explained, “I think I learned when Mrs. Groves got up to teach, that helped me a lot. The way she explained it, that was helpful.” Angel denied the group activity helped her learn about community health theories and cultural values.

Objective #2: Relate stress adaptation phenomena to various developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher gave each group a handout with a scenario about a family living in a dirty house. Each group was assigned a different developmental age to discuss how they would respond to the situation. The students had to role-play their scenario for the class. When asked if they met objective 2 through this group activity, four students told me they did. Angel explained how the role-playing reinforced her learning of the course content. She said, “I guess the role-playing helped me to understand it [the course content] and to see the different groups, also.” Jim gained an awareness of how stress affects family systems through this group activity. He related this information back to his own personal experience. He stated,

I learned you can’t assume on just by the appearance of something that people are really dirty. I think that group activity kinda gave me a new understanding. You know, it might not necessarily be that they are dirty. Cause I was raised with the disorganized house, disorganized life. I think that influenced me and this gives me, that helped me to understand that just because people might not have the same standards of how to keep the home clean or bathing or whatever, that it is just different from me and that it is not wrong.

Chris stated he learned the objective through the group activity because students’ shared their knowledge. He said, “We did work together by putting in or pooling all our information.
Not necessarily teach each other, but interpret what they understood and then form our own opinion. It was just enough to get through the assignment.”

Although Kim did not gain knowledge of the course content, she did gain knowledge of the group members when personal experiences were shared. Kim explained,

I remember that activity, cause we were all talking about how we didn’t like to go into somebody’s house. They just started sharing each others’ experience…I learned about them [group members] more, the way they preferred things and the way they didn’t.

Tess agreed she did not gain knowledge of the course content through the group activity. She explained group activities are not the best method for her to learn. She does not change her opinion of the course content when group members share their knowledge. She believed her own family system she grew up in gave her knowledge about family systems. Tess stated,

The stuff on family communication was something that I think is taught to you as you grow up. That is something within me. That is my own opinion instilled in me. That is not going to change unless I go through an experience that makes me change. But somebody saying something is not going to change my opinion.

Betsy could not remember gaining knowledge of the objective through this group activity.

Objective # 3: Relate nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community.

The teacher assigned each group different scenarios from a worksheet. The students were instructed to develop a care plan utilizing the nursing process. When asked if they met objective 3 through this group activity, five students told me they did. Angel explained how students’ sharing their knowledge expanded her understanding of the nursing process.

We had all looked up stuff and it was about the nursing process. Maybe primary interventions or something about that and, I mean, it was in the book and we just knew from other classes the answer. So we all thought the same thing.
Students’ sharing their knowledge helped Betsy learn more about the nursing process. She explained,

I think it helped, um, I know they helped me with like, I don’t know if it was really pertaining to this question or not, but, like with the different levels of prevention. I know we like, talked to each other and that helped me a lot about the different levels and what things go into the different levels. Whether it’s screening or immunizations or what….Everybody had different ideas so, we had put those together and that helped.

Jim told me working with students during this group activity helped him gain knowledge of how to provide care for individuals, families, or groups in the community. He stated, “I think as far as the giving care to individuals and families, it helps you to decide how to do that.” Chris gained knowledge of the nursing process when each student answered sections of the assignment. Each student was assigned a step in the nursing process to develop a care plan. Chris explained this structuring used to complete the assignment helped him gain knowledge of the course objective. He said, “With our group, it was mainly I guess, a little section did this part and a little section did that part. And like I got along maybe with a certain section. All together I found we did good.”

Instead of learning the course content for objective 3 through this group activity, Kim learned about her group members. She explained how working together helped her communication skills.

That did help because it was the first time meeting Betsy and all of them, so, I was able to talk to them more and I felt more comfortable. You know and sharing with them even though I’d been with them two semesters before and never really talked with them. So, it helped our communication by allowing us to be open with each other.

Tess did not gain knowledge of the nursing process through the group activity. She explained why the group activity did not work for her.
Well, like I said for the previous question. They had different opinions and I listened, of course, but, um, like I said, I learned from what they said and I kept my own opinions. If it was up to me, I would do it my own way.

Objective #4: Demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students in each group were given individual assignments to develop a teaching plan for unwed teenage mothers. Although the assignments were individual, each group member had to attend the program for the unwed teenage mothers to provide support and encouragement. The teacher also used worksheets with scenarios, which helped students have information to develop a nursing care plan. When asked if they met objective 4 through this group activity, four students acknowledged they gained an understanding of critical thinking and accountability. Tess believed the group demonstrated accountability for answering questions on the worksheet. She explained,

Accountability was definitely done, because like if we had divided questions we each took a question and answered it. We only had a limited time to answer it. So, instead of everybody trying to answer and give their opinion, there was no time for that. So, we split it up and would go over it. So, we shared the work really well and that wasn’t a problem at all.

Chris commented on how the group helped him gain an understanding about the ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community. He said, “I guess the group kinda gets me straight sometimes, because I forget about those ethical/legal deals.”

Accountability was important issues for both Jim and Kim. Jim explained how he demonstrated accountability to his group members. He said,
…you have to be accountable to the group for your portion of the presentation. I think that helps you to say, ‘well, I need to do my section or my part cause if I don’t, then everybody else is gonna have problems.’ So, that is how I think that it helped out with my accountability.

Kim replied how she gained an understanding of accountability and critical thinking with the group activity. She said,

Um, well with accountability for nursing decisions….(pause)…critical thinking. Whenever we each divided up our questions, we had to critically think and we were accountable for getting the right answer, because everybody was depending on our answer since we split it up. You wanted to find the right answer. The group and the rest of the class was going to hear your answer.

Angel and Betsy denied they gained an understanding of accountability through the group activity. Betsy did say the group’s responses helped reinforce her critical thinking skills. She said, “Yeah, I had an idea, but they just kinda reinforced it, I guess.”

Objective # 5: Critique research studies applicable to community nursing practice.

The teacher assigned scenarios about the incidence of diseases among different age groups. Students had to have research skills in order to critique and analyze the vital statistics found in the scenarios. When asked if they met objective 5 through this group activity, four students admitted by working together on the group activity, they were able to critique research studies. Angel remembered the group members had to ask for help with the assignment from the teacher. Overall, the task of critiquing was completed. She said,

It took us a while to figure it out. I remember that. It was a chart with the mortality table. We had to ask for help on that one, but we figured it out finally. I think I did learn. We did ask for help though.

Betsy was able to apply her research skills during the group activity to accomplish the critiquing of the article. She added, “I know we would talk together and pick out the important points of the scenarios and whatever. And we would apply it to the question.”
Chris believed working together as a group helped with the assignment on critiquing. He said, “My group, I mean we talked amongst each other. I did my work. I did my section and they each did theirs, we did the assignment.” Jim agreed working together as a group helped with the assignment on critiquing.

Kim stated she was absent from this group activity, therefore, she did not gain knowledge of this objective. Tess withdrew from the group activity because she does not like statistics. She admitted she did not gain knowledge about critiquing research from this group activity. She said, Honestly, on that one, I kind of was like, ok, whatever the answer you all want to give is fine, cause I don’t enjoy statistics. I just don’t, I mean, I know I have to do it because it is a part of this class. But, since it was in the group, I was delivered from that one. So, I really could say it didn’t influence me, because I wasn’t into that one. I really didn’t. That was not my thing.

Students gained knowledge by sharing personal experiences especially related to families and cultural values. Some of the group activities were effective teaching strategies. Some students gained knowledge from the group activities when it was followed by a lecture from the teacher. The group activities promoted accountability among the group members, which enhanced their learning of the course content.

The group activities as teaching strategies did not help some students achieve the course objectives. At times, students either missed the group activity due to absenteeism or they chose not to participate in the group activity. This lack of student involvement impeded on some students’ learning.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which social interactions created learning and ways in which social interactions impeded their learning. See Table 8.5.
Table 8.5
Characteristics from “The Commuters”
With Influence on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gained new perspective on cultural values</td>
<td>Gained new perspective on cultural values</td>
<td>Gained new perspective on cultural values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Role-playing effective strategy</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Gained knowledge about family systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Structure of group activity</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gained knowledge of ethical/legal parameters</td>
<td>Demonstrated accountability to group members</td>
<td>Observed accountability from group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Worked together to complete assignment</td>
<td>Applied research skills to complete assignment</td>
<td>Worked together to complete assignment</td>
<td>Worked together to complete assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which enhance learning of the course content as described by the students.

Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The themes related to shared knowledge and the structure of the group activity.

As students shared their knowledge and personal experiences, students learned the objectives of the course. Three students gained a new perspective on cultural values from objective 1; one student gained information about stress on family systems on objective 2; and one student gained knowledge of ethical/ legal parameters of nursing care on objective 4. One student was able to apply her research skills to complete assignment for objective 5.

The structure of the group activities helped students learn the objectives of the course. One student gained knowledge of objective 2 through the use of role-playing as the teaching
strategy. Assigning sections of the questions to different students helped one student learn the
course content related to objective 3. Demonstrating accountability to the group members helped
two students successfully achieve objective 4. One student saw how the group members
structured their answers to the questions, therefore demonstrating accountability to the group
members. Students worked together as a team in order to complete the task, which enhanced
their learning of the course content.

Table 8.6 illustrates group processes, which impeded learning, as described by the students.

**Themes.** One theme emerged from the characteristics of social interactions. The theme
related to ineffective group activity. Three students told me the group activity was ineffective in
helping them learn objective 1. Two students told me the group activity was ineffective in
learning objective 2. One student claimed she gained an understanding of her group members by
working in the group activity. However, the activity itself did not help her learn the course
content in objective 2. One student stated the group activity was ineffective in helping her learn
objective 3. One student claimed her communication skills were improved by working on the
group activity. However, she did not express gaining knowledge of the course content in
objective 3. Two students told me the group activity was ineffective in learning objective 4. One
student was absent from class during the group activity for objective 5; therefore she did not gain
knowledge about the course content. Another student withdrew from participating in the group
activity because of her lack of knowledge of statistics. Therefore, she did not gain knowledge of
critiquing research articles.
Table 8.6
Characteristics of “The Commuters”
With Impediments on Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
<td>Learned from lecture; not group activity</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Could not remember gaining knowledge from group activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gained knowledge of group members, not objective</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced communication skills</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
<td>Group activity did not help gain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Was absent from group activity</td>
<td>Did not participate in group activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent the group processes, which impeded learning of the course content, as described by the students.

Professional Development

In this section, I discuss how students’ interactions within the group promoted or impeded their professional development. I use the course objectives and group activities as guides to analyze if these interactions promoted or impeded professional development.

Objective #6: Relate the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system.

In order to achieve this objective, students were instructed by the teacher to identify an article about a public health issue in a newspaper that was handed to each group. Handouts were given of the professionals managing the different departments of the health care delivery system.
locally, state, and nationally. The goal of this group activity was to help students understand the role of a community health nurse in relation to the United States health care delivery system. When asked if they met objective 6 through the group activity, five students told me they gained knowledge of the course content. Angel remembered the group working together to find the article, and mutually agreeing on the article. She stated, “Yes, I learned about public health issues. There was just one article, so we really didn’t have many decisions to make. But we all agreed on the article.” Kim agreed the group members achieved a consensus during the group activity, which helped her learn about public health issues. She explained,

Well, that one was interesting because we all grabbed a section of the paper and we were trying to find something together, so, and then somebody would have a section and then they would put it down. And then another one would pick it up and try to find it, so. And then, finally, somebody found it and we, like, this is it and then we all read the article and passed it around. We were able to present it.

Betsy added her knowledge of public health issues was expanded as she read the newspaper to find articles. She said, “It let me know about some of the different things that were going on in the country or the world.” Jim claimed the group activity and handouts helped him gain an understanding of the health care delivery system. He told me, “It helped me organize who goes where.” Chris explained how students’ sharing their knowledge helped him understand the newspaper article. He said,

Our newspaper article was mainly on tax reform and how we would benefit. With Gore’s plan and how Bush’s plan was gonna be. It was just a really hard detailed issue and unless you had a business background it was difficult to follow. But it did give a little background and we just shared our views on the subject. I guess we shared what our financial standpoint is.

Tess told me she did not learn the course content for objective 6. She explained why she did not gain knowledge about public health issues in the United States health care delivery system. She said,
I was totally lost. I’m gonna be honest. That and the statistic thing were the two things I did not get in the whole class and honestly I didn’t try and get it. Because everybody else would seem to get it and I was ok. I didn’t want her [the teacher] to start over. I didn’t understand her [the teacher] when she was teaching it. When it came to that, the government thing or whatever, I didn’t get it at all.

**Objective #7** Relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in the community.

Students were given individual assignments to implement a teaching plan they developed for unwed teenage mothers. When asked if they met objective 7 through this group activity, three students told me they did. They gained knowledge by sharing their knowledge with group members. This sharing of knowledge expanded students’ perspective of different therapeutic interventions, which were used in teaching high risk groups such as the unwed teenage mothers. When asked if she learned objective 7, Betsy replied,

> Everybody had different ideas of what you would do for that situation. We would bring them all together and decide on the different ways of how to intervene in the family and with the individual. We used each other as resources.

Jim agreed with Betsy. He, too, learned the course content when the group members shared their knowledge. He said, “I think it broadened my perspective on that as far as what interventions we can use for different problems.” As students worked on different sections of the teaching plan, they would share with the group members how they were going to present their teaching plans and whether they were going to use handouts, according to Kim. She explained this sharing made them “all similar” in implementing their teaching plans.

When asked if they met objective 7 through this group activity, two students claimed they did not learn different therapeutic interventions or the roles of the nurse. Both Angel and Tess stated they worked on their teaching plan individually. They did not engage other group
members to help in developing interventions. Chris added the group activity did not help him gain knowledge of objective 7.

Objective # 8: Interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of community health and community-based settings.

The teacher used the teaching plan as a way to introduce the students to the role of the community health nurse. When asked if they met objective 8 through this group activity, three students told me they did. These students became aware of the role of the community health nurse and of the roles they demonstrated while presenting the teaching plan. Both Jim and Betsy gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse. Jim explained,

When I started the class on community health, I thought a community health nurse was like the public health nurse. Well, I understand that you have your home health, hospice care, and different types of community health nurse. Basically, really, I mean they clinical nurse, but, uh, you are in the community, you have to practice in the community, and function in the community. And I think that from what I learned, um, it is a lot broader from what I initially thought it was. What their role is, it is basically everything.

Betsy agreed with Jim. When asked if she met objective 8, she said, “Well, it informed me what a community health nurse does. I had an idea before I came to class about work like home health. I guess it reinforced it and told me things I didn’t already know.” Tess felt the teaching plan helped her develop her role as an educator. She had to develop a teaching plan on parenting skills. She explained,

I always thought of the educator, but I had to educate myself about kids. I do babysit, but I didn’t know what the best response was to discipline because I don’t have kids. When I do babysit, I give the kids whatever they want. I know that as a parent, I’m thinking that as a parent you don’t want to do that, spoiling them. So, I had to educate myself on that first and then I kind of educated them on what I had learned. So, I was new to it just as much as them [the teenage mothers].

When I asked Tess if she developed her role as an educator, she replied, “Yes, I did.”
Kim discovered the group activity motivated the group members to act professionally in front of the teenage mothers. She explained how this group activity helped with her role development.

Working with each other, we found that when we went to a different place, we all had to work together cause we were presenting ourselves as a group from McNeese, so, that was really important…We worked together more in front of the setting.

When asked if the teaching activity helped them meet objective 8, both Angel and Chris told me this group activity did not. Angel expressed disappointment at the teaching activity. She commented, “The group [teenage mothers] were not too interactive….they were shy.” Chris commented he just “couldn’t get into the activity”.

Most students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse in the health care delivery system. Their knowledge of the public health system was also enhanced through the group activities. By sharing their knowledge with each other, students gained an understanding of the role of the community health nurse, which promoted their professional image.

Three students believed the group activities did not help them understand the role of the community health nurse. Their professional image was not promoted through the group activities or through the social interactions between the group members.

Analysis

Students acknowledged ways in which their social interactions promoted their professional development and ways it impeded their professional development. Table 8.7 illustrates the group processes, which promoted professional development, as described by the students.
Themes. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme related to teamwork and the second theme related to role development.

Table 8.7
Characteristics from “The Commuters”
Which Promote Professional Development as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Worked together to reach consensus</td>
<td>Knowledge of public health expanded</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>Gained understanding of health care system</td>
<td>Worked together to reach consensus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used group members as resources</td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gained knowledge of the role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Gained knowledge of the role of community health nurse</td>
<td>Developed her own professional role</td>
<td>Developed her own professional role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the columns represent group processes, which promoted professional development as described by the students.

Students shared their knowledge and learned to work together as a team. As they worked together, they developed consensus-building skills. Sharing knowledge, working as a team, and learning how to reach a consensus are important characteristics a professional nurse must have to be able to work in the health care delivery system. Students achieved objectives 6 and 7 through the group activities.

Students gained an awareness of the important role a community health nurse has in the health care delivery system. Teaching individuals outside the classroom helped students
understand the importance of their own roles as a professional nurse. Students achieved objective 8 through the group activities.

Table 8.8 illustrates the group processes, which impeded their professional development, as described by the students.

### Table 8.8
**Characteristics from “The Commuters”**
**Which Impeded Professional Development as the Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Angel</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Tess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Did not gain knowledge from group activity</td>
<td>Did not gain knowledge from group activity</td>
<td>Did not work with group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did not work with group members</td>
<td>Did not gain knowledge from group activity</td>
<td>Did not work with group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Did not grow professionally</td>
<td>Could not get into activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The data in the columns were characteristics described by Angel, Chris, and Tess as to why the objectives were not met.*

**Themes.** Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method, one theme emerged from the interviews. The theme related to lack of student involvement. Angel, Chris, and Tess did not participate with the group members during the activities, which affected their professional development.

**Summary**

The social interactions among “The Commuters” indicated a low degree of group cohesiveness. No cliques formed, which influenced course content learning or professional development. The missing data became an obstacle to assessing the social interactions among these students. Under professional development, there were no mutual choices among the students. Thus, the group cohesiveness could not be computed.

Two themes emerged from the objectives measuring course content learning. These themes related to shared knowledge and the structure of the group activity. By socially
interacting, students learned to share their knowledge, which created learning. Students learned how to assign sections of the assignment, thus working as a team, which created learning of the course content. Students observed how important accountability was to group functioning, which helped them learn the course content.

One theme emerged from the interviews. Ineffective group activity became a barrier to learning for students in this group. Students withdrew from the group activity or missed the group activity, which impeded on their learning. On several occasions, students believed the group activity did not help them meet the objectives of the course.

Two themes emerged from the objectives measuring professional development. These themes related to teamwork and role development. Students gained knowledge of the importance of teamwork, consensus building, and sharing knowledge as elements of professional development.

Through the group activities, students gained knowledge of the importance of the role of the community health nurse. They also understood the importance of their own roles as a professional nurse, thus their professional images were enhanced.

One theme emerged from the interviews. Lack of student involvement hindered some students’ professional development. Students missed class, did not work with group members, or chose not to participate in the group activities, which impacted on their professional development. These students professional image was hindered due to lack of student involvement.
Chapter 9: Cross-Case Analysis

An effective way to analyze data across different cases is to use Spradley’s componential analysis (1980). A componential analysis is a systematic way to look for meanings or attributes that people have assigned to events they have experienced. For the purpose of this research, I bring the reader back to the two research questions:

1. In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning?
2. In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development?

I discuss each variable using Spradley’s componential analysis method. I begin by discussing the independent variable, social interactions.

Social Interactions

Keeping with Moreno’s (1934/1953) network analyses, the social interactions were measured using Kerlingers’ (1986) sociometric indices. I looked at the influence of the social interactions on course content learning and professional development. To do this, a componential analysis was done by comparing the group cohesiveness score of each case study and the number of cliques that formed from the interactions of students in each group.

Cliques, which form within a group, are Kerlinger’s way to visualize the patterns of social interactions found among group members. Kerlinger categorized the group’s cohesiveness as high, moderate, and low depending on the score. High group cohesiveness scores were .50 and higher. Moderate group cohesiveness scores ranged from .30 - .49. Low group cohesiveness scores ranged from .10 - .29. Table 9.1 contrasts these two sociometric indices for the variable course content learning.
Table 9.1
Componential Analysis of Social Interactions
With Learning as the Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th># of cliques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Survivors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Laughers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Culturally Sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Serious-Minded</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commuters</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In this paradigm, the group cohesiveness scores are measured as high, moderate, and low. The group cohesiveness score is compared with the number of cliques.

Based on the componential analysis, groups who formed more cliques had higher group cohesiveness scores. “The Survivors” had two cliques form and a high group cohesiveness score of .56. “The Laughers” formed only one clique and had a moderate group cohesiveness score of .40. “The Culturally Sensitive” formed one clique, but had a low group cohesiveness score of .29, which was at the upper range of the low category. “The Serious-Minded” and “The Commuters” did not form cliques and had low group cohesiveness scores. Not all the group members reported their social interactions in their journals, which could explain the small number of cliques and reduced group cohesiveness scores in “The Culturally Sensitive”, “The Serious-Minded”, and “The Commuters”, thus, limiting the findings. The number of cliques formed indicates how group members interacted to achieve the course objectives. Based on the componential analysis, the number of cliques formed had a high influence on course content learning.
Next, a componential analysis of the group cohesiveness scores and number of cliques for the criterion variable professional development is placed in Table 9.2.

### Table 9.2
**Componential Analysis of Social Interactions With Professional Development as Criterion Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th># of cliques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Survivors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Laughers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Culturally Sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Serious-Minded</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Commuters</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** In this paradigm, group cohesiveness scores are measured by high, moderate, and low. The group cohesiveness score is compared with the number of cliques. * “The Commuters” had no mutual choice pairs, therefore, no group cohesiveness score was computed.

In this componential analysis of the social interactions influencing professional development, the number of cliques formed between students did have a moderate effect on group cohesiveness scores. “The Survivors” had one clique form among the group members and had a moderate group cohesiveness score of .44. “The Laughers” had one clique form among the group members and had a moderate group cohesiveness score of .40. “The Culturally Sensitive” and “The Serious-Minded” had one clique and moderate group cohesiveness scores of .29 and .19. “The Commuters” had no cliques and no mutual choice pairs; therefore, the group cohesiveness score could not be computed. This componential analysis indicated that the number of cliques had a moderate influence on group cohesiveness, or professional development.
Analysis

Network analysis measures observable patterns of interacting (Moreno, 1934/1953). The sociometric indices used to measure students’ learning of the course content seemed to have a pattern. The paradigm indicated the number of cliques formed among the students and an increase in the group’s cohesiveness. These cliques formed a strong cohesiveness among the students, which enhanced their learning. The pattern of social interactions, or number of cliques among the students, had a moderate effect on students’ professional development.

Course Content Learning

Next, I will use Spradley’s (1980) componential analysis to contrast themes emerging from students’ interviews. Table 9.3 illustrates the componential analysis of themes influencing students’ learning of the course content. Spradley’s componential analysis is a useful tool to analyze the dependent variable, course content learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>The Survivors</th>
<th>The Laughers</th>
<th>The Culturally Sensitive</th>
<th>The Serious-Minded</th>
<th>The Commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Structure</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The rows illustrate the themes that emerged from the group processes of ways students’ learning was enhanced, as described by the students.

Based on the componential analysis of contrasting themes, some students in “The Serious-Minded” group believed that sharing their knowledge, working together as a team, and the type
of group activity enhanced their learning of the course content. Some students in “The Survivors” and “The Culturally Sensitive” groups believed how they organized the group tasks and sharing their knowledge helped them learn the course content. Some students in “The Laughers” believed sharing their knowledge and working together as a team helped them learn the course content. Some students in “The Commuters” believed sharing their knowledge helped them learn the course content. In conclusion, most of the students gained knowledge of the course content through shared knowledge, effective group activity, teamwork, and dividing the group tasks evenly to complete the assignment.

Next, Table 9.4 illustrates a paradigm of common themes of group processes, which impeded their learning of the course content.

### Table 9.4
Componential Analysis of Themes
With Impediment of Learning as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>The Survivors</th>
<th>The Laughers</th>
<th>The Culturally Sensitive</th>
<th>The Serious-Minded</th>
<th>The Commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective group activity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of student involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The rows illustrate the themes that emerged from the group processes of ways students’ learning was impeded, as described by the students.

Based on the componential analysis of contrasting themes related to barriers in learning, some students in “The Survivors”, “The Laughers”, “The Culturally Sensitive”, “The Serious-Minded”, and “The Commuters” believed the group activities were ineffective and did not help them learn the course content. Some students in “The Survivors”, “The Laughers”, and “The Serious-Minded” believed that student relationships interfered with their learning of the course
content. Some students in “The Culturally Sensitive” group believed lack of student involvement became a barrier to their learning of the course content. In conclusion, some students did not like working in groups, missed classes, and were disrespectful to other group members, which made the group activities ineffective. These interactions impeded on some students learning of the course content.

Another method of triangulating data is to review students’ final course grades as an indicator of their course content learning. Using Spradley’s componential analysis, Table 9.5 represents the contrast of students’ final course grades.

**Table 9.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study A</th>
<th>Case Study B</th>
<th>Case Study C</th>
<th>Case Study D</th>
<th>Case Study E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 89.9  Mean = 91.88  Mean = 90.17  Mean = 90.1  Mean = 90.93

Note: The table illustrates students’ final course grades. Only the students who participated in the interviews had their final course grades used to calculate the mean score.

Based on this componential analysis, “The Laughers” had the highest final grade mean score, followed by “The Commuters”. Both “The Culturally Sensitive” and “The Serious-Minded” had similar mean scores. “The Survivors” had the lowest mean score of students’ final course grade.
Only students who participated in the interviews had their final grades reported, which limits the findings. There were no significant differences in the overall mean score of students’ final course grade.

**Analysis**

Students’ interactions during the group activities, such as sharing their personal experiences and knowledge, supported their learning of the course content. Structuring of the group tasks by dividing the tasks among the group members provided a structure for the students to work together creating teamwork. This teamwork created a space for students to complete the assignments in a timely manner, thus achieving the objectives, and learning the course content. Overall, the mean score of final course grades numerically would be in the “B” range, which indicates students achieved learning of the course content through the various teaching methods.

However, for some students, the group activities did not help them gain knowledge of the course content. Student relationships also impeded students’ learning. Being absent from class, withdrawing from the group assignment, and not sharing their knowledge affected students’ learning of the course content through the group activities.

**Professional Development**

The next dependent variable to be analyzed using Spradley’s (1980) componential analysis is professional development. Table 9.6 contains themes, which emerged from students’ interviews. Based on the componential analysis of contrasting themes, some students in “The Survivors” and “The Commuters” believed that the group activities helped them understand their own role development and promoted teamwork, thus promoting their professional development. Some students in “The Laughers” and “The Serious-Minded” groups believed the group activities helped them understand their own role development and enhanced their interpersonal
relationship skills, thus promoting professional development. Some students in “The Culturally Sensitive” group believed by sharing their personal experiences during the group activities, their role development was promoted. In conclusion, some students’ professional behaviors, such as interpersonal relationship skills, were enhanced through the group activities. Being able to communicate with others and team-building are important professional behaviors.

### Table 9.6
Componential Analysis of Themes With Promotion of Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>The Survivors</th>
<th>The Laughers</th>
<th>The Culturally Sensitive</th>
<th>The Serious-Minded</th>
<th>The Commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationship skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The rows illustrate the themes that emerged from the group processes as ways students’ professional development was promoted, as described by the students.

Table 9.7 contains themes emerging from students’ interviews. The table illustrates ways students’ professional development was impeded through the group processes. Based on the componential analysis of contrasting themes, some students in “The Survivors” and “The Commuters” believed the group activities were ineffective and lack of student involvement hindered their professional development. Some students in “The Laughers” and “The Culturally Sensitive” groups believed the group activities were ineffective and did not promote their professional development. Some students in “The Serious-Minded” believed the group activities
and the interpersonal relationship skills were inappropriate during group activities, thus hindering their professional development.

Table 9.7
Componential Analysis of Themes
With Impediment of Professional Development as Criterion Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>The Survivors</th>
<th>TheLaughers</th>
<th>The Culturally Sensitive</th>
<th>The Serious-Minded</th>
<th>The Commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective group activities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of student involvement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The rows illustrate the themes that emerged from the group processes as ways students’ professional development was hindered, as described by the students.

In conclusion, some students’ professional images were not promoted through the group activities. At times, inappropriate interactions among the students interfered with students’ relationships with each other. When students chose not to work with their group member on activities, such as the teaching plan, their professional image was hindered.

Analysis

Based on the componential analysis, students’ gained an understanding of the professional role of the community health nurse through the group activities. As students shared their knowledge and used appropriate interpersonal relationship skills, their own professional role was enhanced.

When students used inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills, such as being negative about the profession of nursing, the other group members’ professional development was impeded. When students chose not to work with the group members, their own professional development was impeded.
Summary

Using Spradley’s (1980) componential analysis yielded interesting results. Social interactions influenced students’ learning of the course content and promoted professional development as evidenced by the number of cliques formed between the group members. With Spradley’s componential analysis, I was able to understand the structural reality of the students’ world, or experience, of participating in a cooperative group learning environment.

Themes emerging from the students’ interviews helped me understand the psychological reality of the students’ experiences of participating in a cooperative group learning environment. Themes related to sharing of knowledge, teamwork, and group structure provided the space for students to achieve the course objectives through the group activities. However, at times the group activities and students’ relationships with each other during the group activities became an impediment to their learning. Overall, students’ final mean course grades ranged from 89.9 to 91.88 indicating they had gained knowledge of the course content. With different learning styles and learning needs, students may or may not learn in an effective manner through group work.

Themes emerging from the students’ interviews helped me understand how the group activities helped students perceive the importance of the role of the community health nurse. Students’ role development was promoted through teamwork, improved interpersonal relationship skills and sharing knowledge about the professional roles of community health nurses. However, some students’ professional images were not enhanced through the group activities. Some students who chose not to participate in the group activities failed to develop their professional image. They lost the opportunity to use the group activity as a means to promote their professional development. At times, inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills between students during the group activities impeded their professional development.
Chapter 10: Conclusions

Much of the cooperative group learning research has been conducted at the elementary and secondary school levels. Because cooperative group learning has been adopted in higher education classrooms, especially nursing education classrooms, research is now focusing on the effectiveness of cooperative group learning in student achievement, social skills, and intergroup relationships. A large gap exists in the nursing education literature regarding cooperative group learning and its effect on knowledge development and professional development. I now bring the reader back to the two research questions:

1. In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their course content learning?
2. In a cooperative group learning environment, how do social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students influence their professional development?

With these research questions in mind, I plan to discuss the findings and literature from education, feminist, and nursing philosophies, which support or contradict the findings.

Social Interactions

From the cross-case analysis, a pattern of how students interacted together emerged. Cliques, which formed between students, influenced the degree of cohesiveness among the group members. The social interactions of students during the group activities influenced the degree the group members bonded in order to learn the course content. However, some of the students did not turn in a journal, which prevented me from analyzing the social interactions in one of the groups. Tinto’s (1997) study reported that students who participate in interactive learning attended class more frequently. My study contradicted these findings.
Two nursing studies explored students’ perceptions of working in a cooperative group learning environment. Diflorio’s (1995) qualitative study indicated students believed working together increased their social support and responsibility to help each other achieve their goal over a four-week period. My study supported these findings. In the groups, which formed two cliques, there was an increased network of support between the members of the group. They held a sense of responsibility to provide information and assignments to group members who were absent from the group activities.

Cairy (1997) worked with Associate Degree Registered Nurses returning to school to receive their baccalaureate degree. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, Cairy explored the effects of cooperative group learning on attitudes, social skills, and processing (feedback) of baccalaureate nursing students over a fifteen-week period. In her study, attitudes comprised motivation, group satisfaction, self-esteem, group cohesiveness, positive attitudes toward school, trust in peers, and greater confidence in self and others. She reported students’ attitudes improved and changed, and social skills increased over the fifteen-week period, while working on group activities. Cairy concluded social skills are “the heart of cooperative learning” (p.65). She recommended nursing research explore in-depth the concept of social skills in relation to students’ learning while working in groups. The findings in my research did not fully support these studies. For example, “The Survivors” had the highest group cohesiveness score than the rest of the groups. However, there was more dissatisfaction among the group members related to group activities. One student in this group did not gain trust in her group members because of the large amount of absenteeism that had occurred. Students did not gain confidence in themselves while working on group activities. Students from “The Survivors” did not achieve a positive attitude towards the class, while working on group activities. One associate degree
nurse was in “The Survivors” and “The Serious-Minded” groups. These students had a marginal influence on course content learning and professional development.

Some students in “The Survivors”, “The Laughers”, “The Culturally Sensitive”, and “The Serious-Minded” believed ineffective student relationships between members of the group impeded their learning. Two nursing studies supported these findings. Cobbs (1995) and Smith (1984) failed to demonstrate significance in the amount or type of social interactions while nursing students worked in cooperative group learning environments.

Course Content Learning

Three themes emerged from students’ interviews of ways the group processes helped students gain knowledge. I will discuss each theme and literature that supports or contradicts these findings.

Shared knowledge

Through the group activities, some students learned the course content by sharing personal experiences and knowledge. Educational theorists support the importance of sharing personal experiences to build a community in the classroom, develop a feeling of closeness and belonging, and recognizing diversity of others’ views (Nowell, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Tinto, 1997). Nowell’s (1996) research supported how sharing of personal experiences influenced social skills within the group. My research findings supported and contradicted this literature. From the interviews, students in the groups told me they learned how to take turns while talking, listened carefully to each group member, learned tolerance and respect for each other. These social skills supported students’ learning of the course content. However, inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills such as not listening to group members, disrespecting students’
values, and cultural differences impeded students’ learning of the course content while working in group activities.

Sharing personal experiences is a common theme in the literature. In particular, feminist literature affirms the value of sharing personal experiences from both teachers and students as a central component of learning (Creedy, et al., 1992; Dunn, 1993; MacDermid, 1992; Parry, 1996; Ropers-Huilman, 1998). Feminist researchers recognize when learners are connected to one another, through the sharing of personal experiences, they see the connection of themselves, their cultural group, their feelings, perceptions, and behaviors (Gontarczyk-Wesola, 1995). According to feminist researchers, each student brings a unique background, perspective, and set of values to any learning experience. The findings in my research supported and contradicted the literature. Students in some groups gained an awareness of their own cultural differences and how these differences influenced their ability to work with others. Tinto’s (1997) study suggested course activities that allowed students to share their personal experiences helped them recognize a diversity of views.

However, other students in these groups became uncomfortable when cultural differences emerged between students while working in the group activities. This impeded on students’ learning of the course content. Some students believed their values and beliefs were “truths learned from childhood.” Since these personal experiences were rooted in their family of origins, they resisted being open to change. They listened to others’ values and beliefs, but were not willing to move from their position of their values and beliefs that were rooted in childhood.

Teamwork

Higgins’ (1991) study indicated cooperative group learning improved performance by working in groups versus individual assignments. Garcia (1993) explored the effects of group
size on learning by using interactive video instruction in nursing education. Garcia’s study also supported increased student satisfaction when working in groups as opposed to individual assignments. Houston’s (1990) research found cooperative group learning improved students’ performance. My research did not fully support the literature. From the componential analysis of the social interactions, I found that students’ gained knowledge and expressed satisfaction when working in groups. Other times, students’ believed their knowledge was not enhanced and expressed dissatisfaction about group assignments. Students did not provide feedback or chose to withdraw from participating from the group activities, which impeded on students’ learning of the course content.

Individual accountability and working as a team were areas described by the students that supported their learning while working on group activities. While working in the groups, students structured group tasks evenly in order to complete the assignment. It was within the context of these relationships, group and individual well-being were supported. Educational literature supported these findings. Collaborating on tasks built a feeling of connectedness and responsibility for oneself and others in the classroom (Griggs & Stewart, 1996; Palmer, 1998, Parry, 1996). However, when students did not to participate in group activities either by being absent or choosing not to, other students believed their learning was compromised. Being absent from class, withdrawing from the group assignment, and not working with other group members hindered students’ learning of the course content.

**Group structure**

Structuring of the group tasks by dividing the work evenly among the group members provided a structure for the students to work together in this study. Students became responsible for completing their share of the work. Class attendance was necessary for the structuring of the
group to take place. Tinto’s (1997) study confirmed students working in a shared learning group developed a network of support from their group members. His study also indicated students attended classes and participated more in a shared learning group. Priebe’s (1997) study supported Tinto’s study in that students attended classes more frequently when cooperative group learning was employed as the teaching strategy. My research did not find this to be true. Students did form a network of support in order to complete the assignments, but the network of support was because of absenteeism of group members. Students who elected to be absent told me in the interviews that they did not like working in groups. Therefore, they frequently missed class. Learning was affected by both the students who did attend class and those who did not.

Structuring of the group tasks became an impossibility when only two people showed up for class. Malmgren (1998) reported group members’ learning are impaired because of students who are chronically absent or tardy. The student who is chronically absent or tardy receives a decreased academic benefit. Their absenteeism impairs their ability to bond with, learn from, and teach other group members.

Structuring of the group to complete tasks allowed students to think critically and make independent decisions about their assigned tasks. In order for the tasks to be completed, students worked individually and then collectively. Working individually on tasks helped students make independent decisions about their assignment and bring this information back to the group for feedback. Receiving feedback from their group members allowed students to enhance their critical thinking skills. Some educational literature supported these findings. Cooper (1995) found immediate feedback from both teachers and students improved critical thinking skills for students in his psychology classes. Hill and Ross (1996) reported students became actively involved in providing feedback and receiving feedback from their group members. The students
judged their overall feedback as valuable to the group members. Heller, Keith, and Anderson (1992) found cooperative group learning enhanced students’ abilities to problem-solve better working in groups than working alone.

**Professional Development**

Three themes emerged from students’ interviews of ways the group processes helped to promote their professional development. I will discuss each theme and literature that supports or contradicts these findings.

**Role Development**

Students gained an understanding of the importance of community health nursing within the health care delivery system. Students also gained an awareness of their own professional role during the group activities. In Shaw and Barrett-Power’s (1998) study, they found individuals with a high sense of awareness of self manage cross-cultural situations effectively. This self-monitoring ability helped students adjust their behavior to fit the situation in order to achieve positive interpersonal interactions. Shaw and Barrett-Power suggested communication skills, willingness to communicate and develop relationships, self-monitoring, and flexibility were diversity management skills. My research supported these findings. As students self-monitored their roles during the implementation of the teaching plan, they achieved positive interpersonal interactions with the unwed teenage mothers. Students discovered that the teenage mothers recognized the students’ knowledge, which enhanced their professional images as nurse. Students were able to envision themselves as professionals because of their interactions with the teenage mothers.
Interpersonal Relationship Skills

Interpersonally, students’ professional images were enhanced through the group activities. Included in these skills are sensitivity to others, tolerance of differences of others, awareness of self, patience, respect, trust, and communication among group members. Hughes and Townley’s (1994) research indicated decision-making, human relations, speaking, networking, and teamwork were skills positively rated by students. In Coffey’s (1997) study of interpersonal behaviors, she found group leader modeling was important for both males and females working in groups. In a previous study, Carroll (1991) found interpersonal relationship skills evolved when students worked in groups. My research did not support this study. Over time, some students displayed inappropriate interpersonal relationship skills such as being negative about the profession of nursing. Negative attitudes about the profession influenced students’ image of themselves as professional nurses.

Teamwork

Nursing education literature supports team-building skills as an important characteristic for a professional nurse. However, nursing literature has not explored how cooperative group learning promotes teamwork, thus promoting professional development. Teamwork helped the students collaborate and complete the assigned tasks. In their study of nursing staff in fourteen intensive care units, nurses, Wheelan and Burchill (1999) explored how conflict resolution and teamwork can help a group achieve interdisciplinary collaboration. Being able to collaborate with each other as students is the first step to learning how to collaborate with members of other disciplines.
Recommendations for Future Research

Cooperative group learning has become more than just a teaching strategy in nursing education, and in higher education. Educational researchers have supported cooperative group learning as a learning theory designed to increase student achievement by promoting intergroup relationships. However, my research both supports and contradicts that student achievement is enhanced through intergroup relationships.

Nursing education benefits from the findings of this study. By working in groups, students learned to value other students’ cultures, personal experiences, and knowledge. Further research can be done to explore how students’ values and beliefs influence their learning and professional development. Group work, group learning, individual work, and individual learning influenced learning both positively and negatively. In some groups, students found they had to complete parts of their group assignments individually inside the group setting, and then discuss it with the other group members. The group who had the highest mean final grade in the class stated they worked on all the parts of the assignment together. The remaining groups acknowledged they worked independently on tasks in the group, and then discussed the answers with the group. Further research can be done to explore, in-depth, how the group functions independently and collectively, and how this influences student learning and professional development.

Group activities affected student learning directly and indirectly. Their own sense of self, influenced how and what they learned from the group activity. For example, during the gumbo recipe, students who were not familiar with this Cajun cuisine, did not relate this assignment to the course objective. Those students, who were familiar with this Cajun dish, enjoyed the
activity, learned different ways to make gumbo, and had an easier time connecting this activity to cultural values and community health theories.

Corrective feedback, or processing as Cairy (1997) referred to in her study, was a missing element during this cooperative group learning experience. Students did not have an opportunity to give each other opinions on behaviors that needed to change in order for the groups to move forward with their task completion. The teachers instructed students to form their group and begin working on assignments without further explanation of group process skills that may have helped them navigate through their assignments. Further research comparing groups who have been taught group process skills, and those who have not would add greatly to educational and nursing literature.

Being in several classes that employed cooperative group learning was a stressor for some students. Research exploring whether students remaining in the same groups throughout the semester are a benefit or a deterrent to student learning, would add to the nursing literature. Research exploring clinical groups and classroom groups and their influence on professional development would enrich nursing literature.

Implications for Nursing Education

Nursing education is in a transition phase being influenced by the National League for Nursing and the changes in the health care delivery system. Future studies need to focus on outcome measurements of knowledge development and professional development from other learning theories, such as problem-based learning. With the use of technology-based courses, social interactions among students are minimized. Therefore, studies that focus on outcome measurements of professional development are necessary for examining socialization of the students.
Nursing theorists believe nursing education, especially the classroom, is the starting point to the socialization process of students into the professional workplace. Studies that compare the effects of student interactions, both in traditional classrooms and classrooms using cooperative group learning, would enhance nursing literature.

Studies exploring the effect mixed classes, both in traditional classrooms and classrooms using cooperative group learning, would enhance nursing literature. Having both associate degree and baccalaureate nursing students in groups did not influence the findings related to course content learning in my study. However, most associate degree nurses have a limited community health component in their curriculum. Therefore, both the associate degree nurses and baccalaureate students did not have prior knowledge of community health nursing before entering the course. Having associate degree and baccalaureate nursing students did influence professional development. One associate degree nurse was critical of the profession of nursing. This negativity influenced one students’ professional development. Studies exploring the effect of mixed classes in areas dealing with the hospital, such as medical-surgical nursing and obstetric nursing may result in different findings.

In the Tylerian model, teachers were the authority figures, the experts. Students gained knowledge from the teacher. Indirectly, the findings support other forms of teaching strategies where the teacher is the facilitator, not the primary source of knowledge. More responsibility is being placed on students to assume their own responsibility for learning. By shifting the responsibility from teachers to students, teachers will have more time to plan creative teaching strategies. Nursing education would benefit from exploring other forms of teaching strategies,
such as distance learning and web-based learning and its effects on student learning and professional development.

At times, the group activities provided a space for students to interact, communicate with each other appropriately, and learn from each other. For those students who do not like working in groups, these elements impeded their learning of the course content. It is important for nursing educators to understand students’ learning styles. Using cooperative group learning as a teaching strategy will not always achieve the objectives of the course for some students. Therefore, teachers may need to use a variety of teaching strategies to help students achieve learning.

Neither educational theorists nor nursing theorists linked cooperative group learning to professional development. As such, the findings of this study provides valuable information about how student interactions in cooperative group learning promoted professional development. Nursing educators have used clinical performance as a measure of professional development. The results of this study indicate that some students’ professional development are promoted by working in groups. However, when students were absent from the group activities or chose not to participate in group activities, they lost the opportunity to grow professionally. Again, in clinical, students’ professional performances are measured individually. The results of this study indicate that students’ professional performances can also be measured through group work. Ways teaching influences professional socialization are important issues for administrators of nursing programs.
References


Appendix A

Pilot Study Instrument
FACULTY AND STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

I will be careful to keep your answers to this survey confidential. Reports of findings will not use names of respondents or schools. If you agree to participate in the interview section of this study, please sign your name at the top of this form. Two faculty and two students will be selected from the signed responses to be interviewed.

Please tell me about yourself:

Faculty ________   Gender: _______    Race: _______
Student ________   Age: _______

For the purpose of this study, community is defined as a sense of belonging in the classroom. Recognizing that some things about the classroom are external, what are your own personal beliefs about the experiences that make it feel like community in the classroom. Please circle the number that most nearly represents Your beliefs about what appears to be community in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not very often</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>There is a shared goal or objective for each class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I feel a strong sense of connectedness and trust with the students in my class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I feel a strong sense of connectedness and trust with the faculty in my class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I feel a mutual liking with my fellow participants in the classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel that the classroom is a safe place from teasing, humiliation, and rejection.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I feel that I belong regardless of my level of performance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I feel accepted by the participants in the classroom regardless of my cultural background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. I feel that I can openly communicate my ideas and feelings in class.  
   1  2  3  4

9. I feel that I am sharing this teaching learning experience with all participants in the classroom.  
   1  2  3  4

10. I feel that I always have someone to turn to when I need help.  
    1  2  3  4

11. In your own words, how would you define community in the classroom?

12. In your own words, how do you think community can exist in the classroom?

13. How do you think the environment in the classroom has contributed to your learning?
Appendix B

Informed Consent
Dear Participant,

I am a student at Louisiana State University working on my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling. I am particularly interested in exploring the social interactions among baccalaureate nursing students in a cooperative group learning environment. If you decide to participate in my study, here is what would happen:

1. I plan to observe your social interactions in your assigned group at least three times during the semester.

2. Midway through the semester, I will set up an interview time for each person within a group. I will interview you individually. After I interview each of you, I plan to transcribe the recordings. After transcribing the interview, I will return a copy of the transcript to you. I ask you to read your transcribed story and validate the interview responses.

3. I ask that you write about your experiences in the classroom. I ask that you freely express yourself about your social interactions in the classroom. I ask that you focus on your experiences with students in your group. There is no restriction to the amount that you write about your experience. You may be as creative as you wish in your journal. Further instructions will be provided.

4. After collecting data for my study, I plan to analyze the results and again ask that you read the results and provide feedback. A copy of the completed dissertation is given to the Graduate School at Louisiana State University. Copies of the findings will also be available to the Dean of the College of Nursing and teachers who are interested in the results of this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your grade in the classes in which you are enrolled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and your participation at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw, observations of the group that you are assigned will continue to take place. You will not be required to participate in

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the interview process or turn in a journal report. This study will be conducted during regular class time. Interviews are scheduled when convenient for both you and me. All typed transcripts and journals will be kept in a filing cabinet at my home to ensure confidentiality. You are identified only by a coding system that I will develop.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me: Golden Tradewell, 318-478-5484 or 318-475-5837 or my research advisor Becky Ropers-Huilman at 225-388-6900. I ask that you keep a copy of this form.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you know you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, and that you have received a copy of this form.

_____________________________   _______________
Signature of participant     Date
Appendix C

Student Journal Guidelines
Student Journal Guidelines

Each day after class, please take a few minutes to write down your personal experiences of what happened in class that influenced your learning. Feel free to be as creative as you would like. I would like for you to focus on the following questions to help guide you in your journalling.

1. Within the members of your group, rate each according to whether they helped your grow professionally? Use the numbers 4,3,2,1,0---4 meaning you have grown professionally because of your interactions with him/her, 0 you have not grown professionally because of your interactions with him/her, and the other numbers representing intermediate degrees of growing professionally because of your interactions with him/her.

2. Within the members of your group, rate each according to whether they helped your learn the course content? Use the same ranking method as found in Question #3.

Please e-mail me the contents of your journal or hand in a typed copy. My e-mail address is gtrade@mail.mcneese.edu. If your handwriting is neat, I do not mind having a handwritten copy. I would like to have this information turned in at the end of each week. Thank you.
Appendix D

Observation Protocol
Observation Protocol

1. The first question that I will use to guide my observation is: What social processes are present while students are working in groups?

Other dimensions that can serve as a guide during this observation include:

   a. **object**: the physical things that are present
   b. **act**: single actions that people do
   c. **event**: a set of related activities that people carry out
   d. **time**: the sequencing that takes place over time
   e. **goal**: the things that people are trying to accomplish
   f. **feeling**: the emotions felt and expressed

2. Other questions that I will use to guide my observations are: “What barriers hindered group work? What social processes facilitated group work? How did the students organize themselves in the groups? What kind of nonverbal behavior was demonstrated by the student while communicating with other students?”
Appendix E

Students’ Open-ended Interview Questions
Interview Questions for Students

1. Tell me about yourself (age, ethnic background, marital status, family status) and anything else that you would like for me to know about you.

2. What experiences in your personal life contributed to your decision to become a nurse?

3. Tell me about your relationships with the other students in your group. Are there any specific interactions that stand out for you? (positive or negative?)

4. How did the relationships with students in your group influence your learning of the course content? Give examples.

(probe) How did the relationships with students in your group influence your learning about:

(a) community health theories
(b) developmental stages and needs of individuals, families, and groups in the community
(c) using nursing process, communication, and independent decision-making skills to the care of individuals, families, and groups in the community
(d) demonstrate critical thinking and accountability for nursing decisions within ethical/legal parameters and standards of care for individuals, families, and groups in the community
(e) critiquing research studies applicable to community nursing practice

5. How did the relationships with students in your group influence your professional development as a nurse? Give examples.

(probe) How did the relationships with students in your group influence:

(a) your understanding of the historical development of community health nursing and the United States health care delivery system
(b) your ability to relate a variety of therapeutic interventions to the roles and functions of
the community health nurse providing care to at risk individuals, families, and groups in
the community

c) your ability to interpret the roles of the community health nurse in a variety of
community health and community based settings

6. How did you promote and support other students’ learning while working in the group? Give
examples.

7. Anything else that you would like to tell me about working in groups.

These questions will be supplemented by others arising from my observations.
Appendix F

Letter of Permission
TO: Ms. Golden Tradewell and Dr. Becky Ropers

DATE: January 29, 2001

SUBJECT: Research

Dear Ms. Tradewell & Dr. Ropers:

We are pleased to inform you that your research project entitled "An Exploratory Case Study of the Social Interactions Among Baccalaureate Nursing Students in a Cooperative Group Learning Environment" has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board of McNeese State University. Your proposal appears to be in compliance with the federal regulations concerning the use of human subjects.

Please retain this letter of approval and the proposal you submitted. If you have any questions, please contact me at 475-5285.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peggy L. Wolfe, Ph.D., R.N.
HSIRB Chairperson

PLW/rrp
Vita

Golden Marrett Tradewell was born on December 6, 1952, in Lake Charles, Louisiana. She was the youngest of two children. During her childhood and adolescent years, she grew up in a small rural town of five thousand people. As early as the age of nine years old, Golden believed she wanted a doctoral degree. Forty years later, her dream came true.

Golden’s career consisted of a baccalaureate degree in nursing in 1974, a master of arts degree in social psychology in 1978, and a master of science degree in nursing with a specialty in adult health in 1982. She began teaching at the university level at the age of twenty-four. Throughout her years of teaching, Golden’s scholarly accomplishments included developing instructors’ test bank questions, developing test bank questions for state board licensure review texts, chapter publications, and developing instructors’ manuals to accompany medical-surgical textbooks used in nursing programs. Various publishing companies have used Golden’s clinical expertise to critique textbooks, computer-assisted instruction modules, and individual chapters.

Her interest of how students develop knowledge and become socialized into the profession of nursing inspired her to conduct this grounded theory research. She will receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Spring Commencement in May 2002.