

Title: Agency and Structure in nursing practice in Vietnam

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Background: The complexities of nursing practice are often obscured in the endeavours to construct a generic definition of nursing. The process of the construction of nursing practice and associated contextual factors, however, ensures considerable variation in nursing work within and across nations. Nursing practice is better understood as constructed by nurses as social actors who perform roles that are negotiated and mediated within context.

Objective: The purpose of this research was to explore the decision making processes of Vitenamese Registered Nurses (RNs) in a clinical environment to gain insight into both the construction of nursing practice within that context and the broader implications for nursing in Vietnam.

Methods: The research was grounded in the broad pragmatist tradition. The methods were informed by the works of Charmaz. The purposeful sample constituted 29 RNs who worked across eight departments of a major hospital in Vietnam. Periods of observations and individual semi-structured interviews were the methods of data generation. Data anlysis involved a systematic abstraction of theoretical concepts.

Results: Two conceptualisations, developed in the analytical process, reflected both agency and structure as important dimensions of nursing practice in Vietnam. Nurses as social actors were constantly engaged in a process of negotiation and renegotiation to sustain some sense of shared order in their practice. Yet, the shared order of practice was constantly disrupted as medical doctors, family members and the managerial hierarchy posed varying demands as they moved in and out of

the space of nurses. The concept of space was thus significant in depicting where and when nurses could practice autonomously. Autonomous nursing practice was directly related to the physical positioning and interrelationships all social actors in the research situation.

Biography

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Category: Oral presentation