Seeking authorization: A grounded theory exploration of **mentors' experiences of assessing nursing students on** the borderline of achievement of practice competence

Dr. Simon Cassidy PhD; RN; BSc (Hons); PGCE; Dip Prof Prac; SFHEA
Practice Education Facilitator/Honorary Lecturer
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board/Swansea University

Session content

- Set the context of the study in relation to mentorship and literature

- Outline the study design, methodology and methods

- Highlight main study findings

- Explain the substantive grounded theory explanation

- Identify study implications for key stakeholders

Nursing & Midwifery Council

NMC

Standards to support learning and assessment in practice

NMC standards for mentors, practice teachers and teachers

Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg
University Health Board

Pre-registration nursing and midwifery mentorship:
Inspiring connections between theory and practice

Background literature

Clarification of competence

- **Tension between 'training and 'education'** (Willis 2012)
- Effects of a lack of definition and measurement of competence (Garside & Nhemachena 2013; Sedgewick et al. 2014)

An evolving history of failing to fail

- Resonance internationally and across professions but still limited evidence base especially in **terms of mentors' experience of failing situations** (Duffy et al. 2013; Black et al. 2013; Finch et al. 2014; Hunt 2014; Cassidy 2016)

Why is failing to fail still an issue?

"*An assessment in a clinical setting, is a unique and complicated event that lives on in the memories of a mentor and the student being assessed*'" (Garside and Nhemachena 2013).

Study design

Research aim: **A grounded theory exploration of mentors' experiences of assessing** nursing students on the borderline of achievement of practice competence
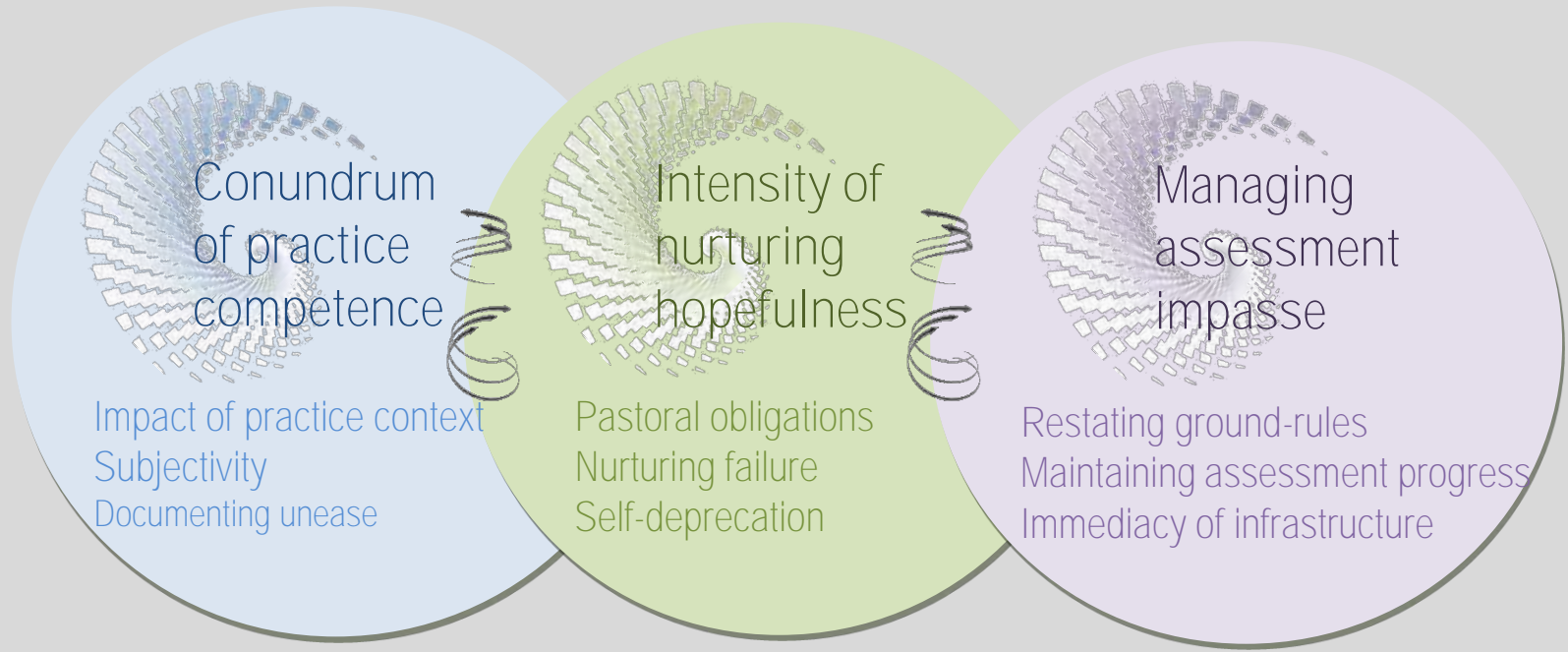
Grounded theory methodology: Development of a substantive theoretical explanation (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Corbin and Strauss 2008)

Methods

Phase one (May-Oct 2009): In-depth semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 20 registered nurse mentors in one NHS Trust who had experienced assessing a student on the borderline of achievement in clinical practice.

Second phase of data collection (July-December 2011): Theoretical sample of nurse mentors and practice educators in a further four Health Boards including seven focus groups (*n=30*) and a further eight semi-structured interviews.

Main study categories

Conundrum of practice competence

Impact of practice context
Subjectivity
Documenting unease

Intensity of nurturing hopefulness

Pastoral obligations
Nurturing failure
Self-deprecation

Managing assessment impasse

Restating ground-rules
Maintaining assessment progress
Immediacy of infrastructure

Category - Conundrum of practice competence

Difficulty of documenting unease

Stephen: "In borderline cases I wonder sometimes are ambiguous statements deliberately made or just poorly written? You know there's thought in saying nothing. I think people think they've articulated concerns through the documentation when they haven't actually <u>nailed</u> it have they." *(Focus group: Stephen – Practice Educator)*

Category - Intensity of nurturing hopefulness

Self-deprecation & coping

"I can understand to a degree why some nurses don't say anything because they don't want to feel a failure mentoring a student, but you have to put that to one side. It's about thinking about the greater good." *(Interview: Mary – Nurse Mentor)*
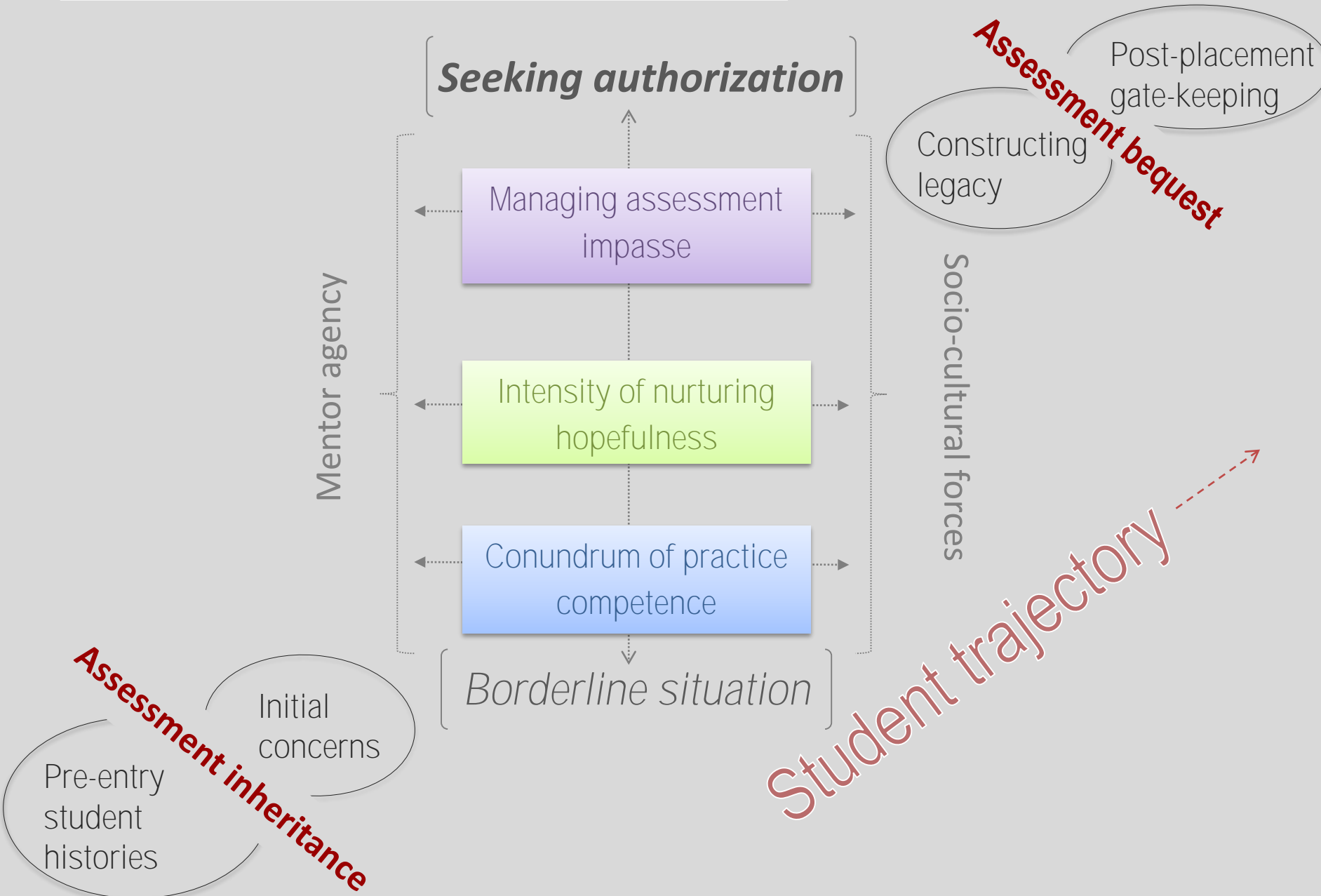
Category - Managing assessment impasse

Immediacy of mentor infrastructure

"It's about a community of mentors. That's something that's been missing. I think mentors work very much in isolation until there are specific issues."
(Focus group: Delia – Nurse Mentor)

The substantive theoretical explanation

Seeking authorization

Managing assessment impasse

Constructing legacy

Post-placement gate-keeping

Assessment bequest

Intensity of nurturing hopefulness

Mentor agency

Socio-cultural forces

Conundrum of practice competence

Borderline situation

Initial concerns

Pre-entry student histories

Assessment inheritance

Student trajectory

Study implications

- Mentors/practice teams: Continued emphasis on duty of candour; Mentor Footprint.

- Health care organizations: Explicit acknowledgement of unusual mentorship circumstances; whole team responsibilities and resources; extended roles.

- Joint Healthcare/HEI initiative: Debriefing & case review systems; readily available action plan protocols; formal recognition of mentorship of failing students.

- Higher Education Institutions: Receipt of feedback; internal checking processes; perceptions of fitness to practise procedures; mentor (and student) preparation for conflict resolution.

- Professional regulators: Re-emphasis of whole practice team assessment approach; mandatory recording of withdrawal of students for practice reasons.

Session content

- Set the context of the study in relation to mentorship and literature

- Outline the study design, methodology and methods

- Highlight main study findings

- Explain the substantive grounded theory explanation

- Identify study implications for key stakeholders

Mentor footprint

Correspondence:
Simon Cassidy, PhD, RN. Practice Education Facilitator
ABMU Health Board, Room G89, Singleton Hospital, Sketty SA2 8QA
Email: simon.cassidy@wales.nhs.uk Tel: 01792200370

PhD Supervision:
Fiona Murphy. PhD, RN. Professor of Clinical Nursing, Department of Nursing & Midwifery,
Faculty of Education & Health Sciences, University of Limerick, Ireland.

Michael Coffey, PhD, RN. Associate Professor, Public Health, Policy and Social Sciences,
Swansea University, Wales.

References

Black, S., Curzio, J., & Terry, L. (2014). Failing a student nurse: A new horizon of moral courage. *Nursing Ethics, 21*(2), 224-238.

Cassidy, S., Coffey, M. and Murphy, F. (2017), 'Seeking authorization': A grounded theory exploration of mentors' experiences of assessing nursing students on the borderline of achievement of competence in clinical practice. J Adv Nurs. Accepted Author Manuscript. doi:10.1111/jan.13292

Duffy, K. (2013). Deciding to fail: Nurse mentors' experiences of managing a failed practice assessment. *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning, 11*(3), 36-58.

Finch, J., Schaub, J., & Dalrymple, R. (2014). Projective Identification and the Fear of Failing: Making Sense of Practice Educators' Experiences of Failing Social Work Students in Practice Learning Settings. *Journal of Social Work Practice, 28*(2), 139-154.

Garside, J. R., & Nhemachena, J. Z. Z. (2013). A concept analysis of competence and its transition in nursing. *Nurse Education Today, 33*(5), 541-545.

Hunt, L. A. (2014). *Failing Securely: Enabling Mentors to Fail Underperforming Student Nurses in Practical Assessments.* (PhD), Birmingham, Birmingham City University.

Sedgwick, M., Kellett, P., & Kalischuck, R. G. (2014). Exploring the acquisition of entry-to-practice competencies by second-degree nursing students during a preceptorship experience. *Nurse Education Today, 34*(3), 421-427.

Willis, P. (2012). *Quality with compassion: the future of nursing education. Report of the Willis Commission on Nursing Education, 2012.* Retrieved from www.williscommission.org.uk