The Ohio State University College of Nursing

Excellence in Nursing Education: National Study informs Innovation in Teaching and Learning

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Background & Purpose

Background

Widespread disruption was experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic across the world. The impact to the healthcare system caused massive changes to care delivery and the challenges extended to nursing education which included moving to online and simulated teaching environments. To assess the impact of these transitions on prelicensure, a four-phase national study was implemented. This poster provides the outcomes of phase four addressing the qualitative question: "What was the experience of faculty, students, and administrators in nursing education during the COVID-19 pandemic?"[1]
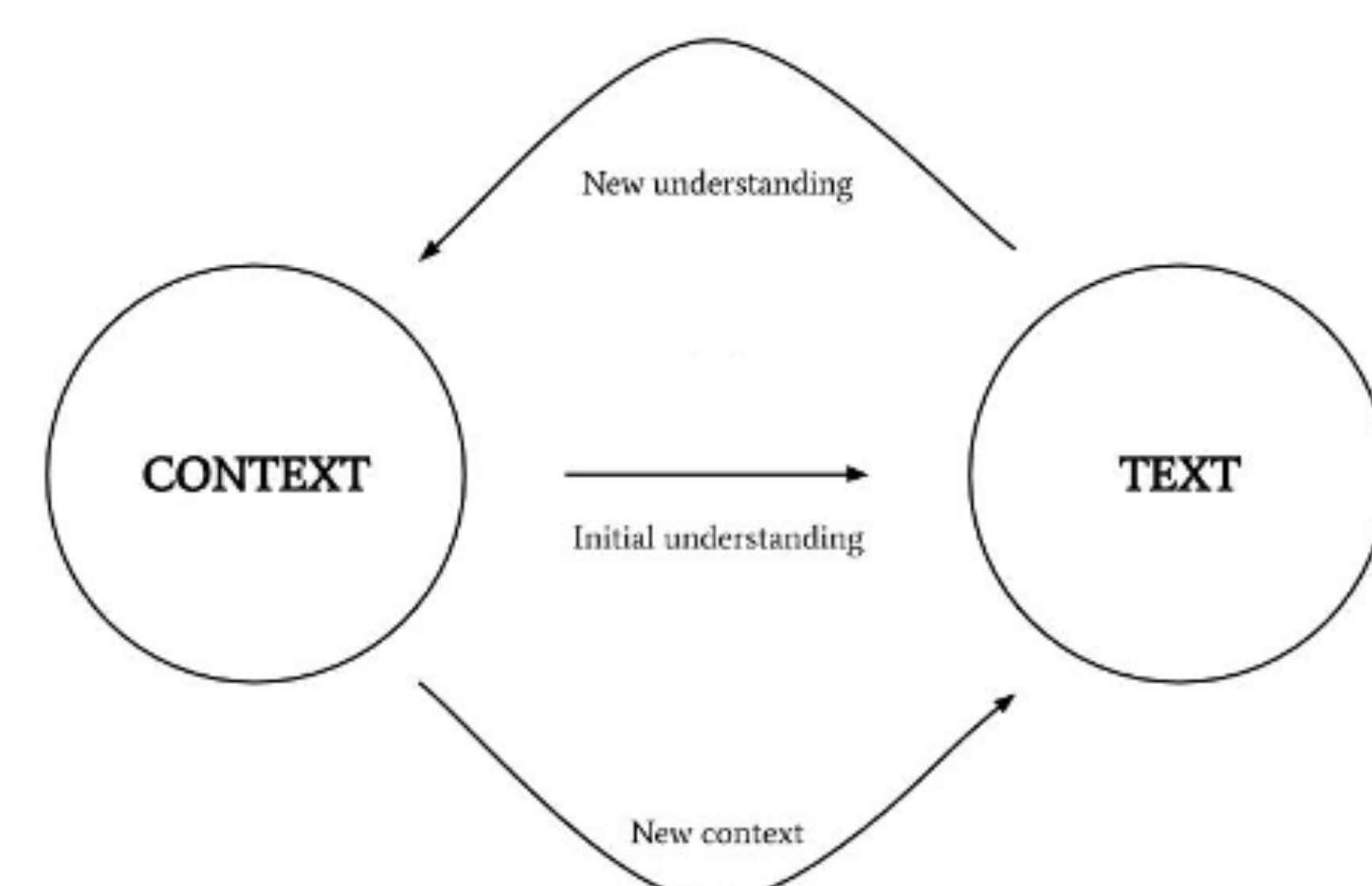
Design & Methods

Design

Phase four of this research study included a qualitative research design that revealed the untold experiences of faculty, students, and administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The qualitative piece of this longitudinal, mixed methods study illuminates the lessons learned and everlasting impacts on nursing educational approaches, giving voice to the experiences. The participants were in focus groups reflective of roles as faculty (4 groups; n=26), students (3 groups; n=22), or administrators (2 groups; n=16).

Methods

This study incorporated a hermeneutic phenomenological methodological approach. The approach to the phenomenon is one in which the researcher remains open to the possibilities of data interpretation. In hermeneutic analysis, it is more of a circular approach, rather than linear, towards the data as noted below. The context of the situation creates an initial understanding in which multiple interactions with the text and research team occur during the analysis in which this study was shaped by the philosophical works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger.

Hermeneutic analysis

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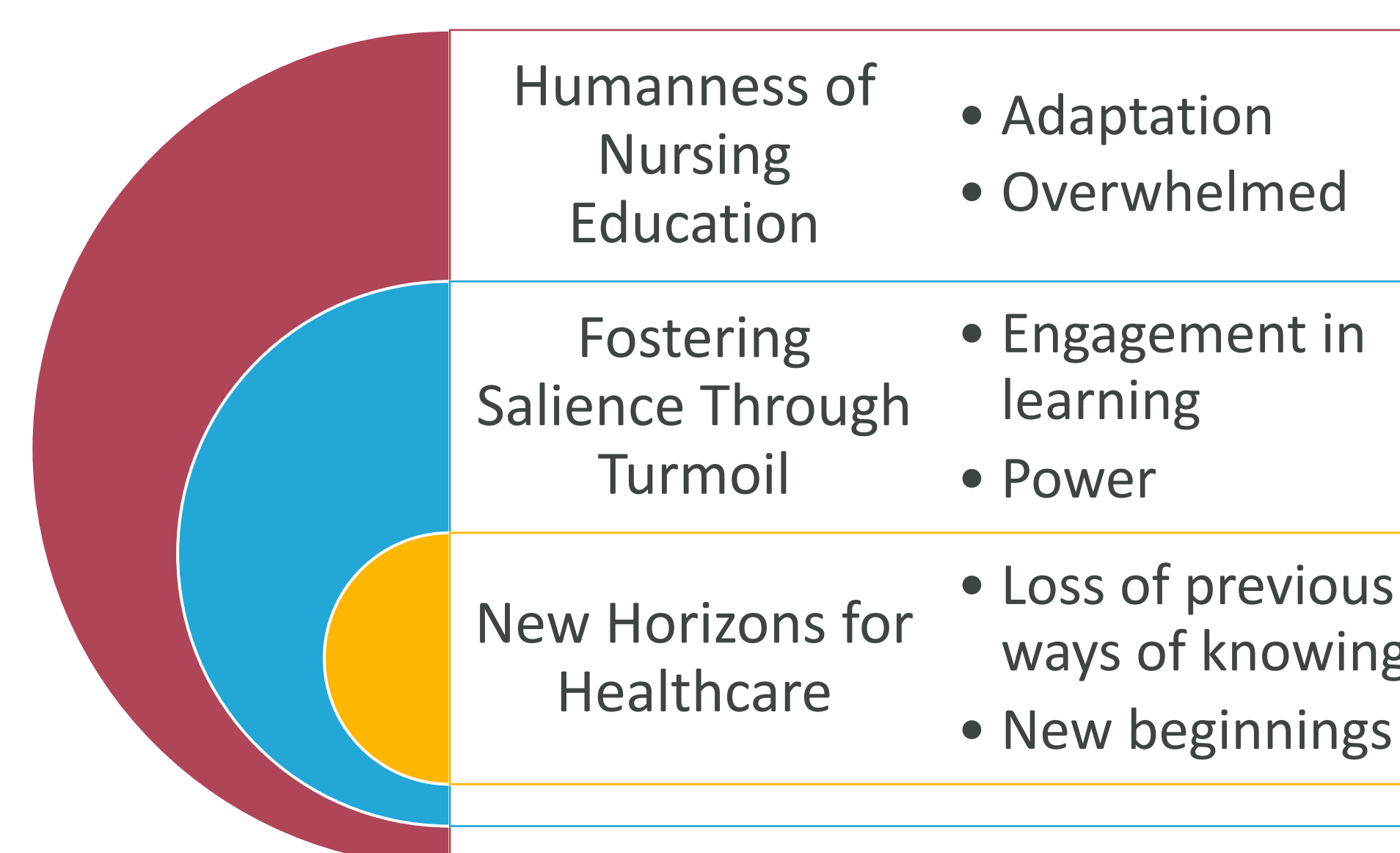
Results

Data Analysis

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach used in this study included a 5-step process derived from a Gadamerian framework.[2]

1. Research Question
2. Pre-understandings
3. Gain Understanding
4. Transcribing and Analyzing
5. Trustworthiness

Themes

Participants Voices

Humanness of Nursing Education

Rowan (faculty): *It was just lonely. It was the loneliest retirement. I just slipped away…even though we had Zoom and everybody said goodbye, everything was virtual, even the awards ceremony. I received an award, and it was just so weird. (overwhelmed)*

Val (student): *I don't know if everyone was always well taken care of during nursing school as they would be if we were in person. We couldn't go to office hours to talk to a professor. Sometimes [in the past] I'd sit on a couch with a professor who would just kind of talk things through and have a little mini meltdown about nursing and it kind of turned to [during the pandemic], "Okay, if you want questions, it has to be Teams" [internet communication], which just isn't the same, and so junior year was very hard for me personally and I almost considered dropping out of nursing school because of the emotional toll. (overwhelmed)*

London (administrator): *We had one student…who had to drive 150 miles to the campus and sit in their car and do all the work using the internet from the college…. It was very hard to catch cheating in these situations. The numbers actually make it look like it's higher before the pandemic than during, and we really have no way of verifying what's true, so it's been a little frustrating that way. (adaptation)*

Participant Voices

Fostering Salience Through Turmoil

Dorian (student): *I did not retain a single thing. I would do the same thing like, "Oh, I can listen," and maybe do something else, so I feel like I'm not bored because even just listening over online…there was nothing to engage with, and I feel like half of the professors almost read off of their PowerPoints…so then that was extra not engaging…. I never feel like I learned as much as I did my first year in person. (engagement in learning)*

Shawn (administrator): *We were imposed on a hiring freeze. We were not able to replace any of our full-time faculty who took the early retirement, but at the same time, the college suffered a tremendous amount of loss of students. They were pressuring us to increase our enrollment and we also got pressure from the community because they needed more nurses, and so, they were asking us to increase enrollment and create new programs. (power)*

New Horizons for Healthcare

Val (student): *[N]ursing education does need to change now with the world that we're in…because what ends up happening is we learn best-case scenario…and that never happens in real life…. It is this gap of "how do you nurse in the 21st century". (loss of previous ways of knowing)*

Sage (faculty): *Instead of debriefing at the end [of clinical], we've instituted it in the midpoint of the shift…. It really worked after the pandemic because they were allowed to grow. We could assess their strengths and weaknesses in clinical by doing these structured questions and help them with prioritization and steer their thinking…. Significant growth occurred because they were allowed to come back after lunch and…asked better questions. (new beginnings)*

Adrian (student): *I just feel like nursing school does need to get with the times and don't be afraid to send your students into whatever's going on if there is ever a future pandemic. That's what we signed up to do. So that's what we need to learn how to do.*

Ainsley (administrator): *[New graduates are seeking roles] in primary care, so the federally qualified health centers and things like that, but some into more traditional public health and community health, home healthcare; agencies are offering new grad residencies around here and so that's been an interesting transition. It's not a huge number, but it's definitely an increase from the number of students we used to see…. We have more students not choosing acute care as new grads. (new beginnings)*
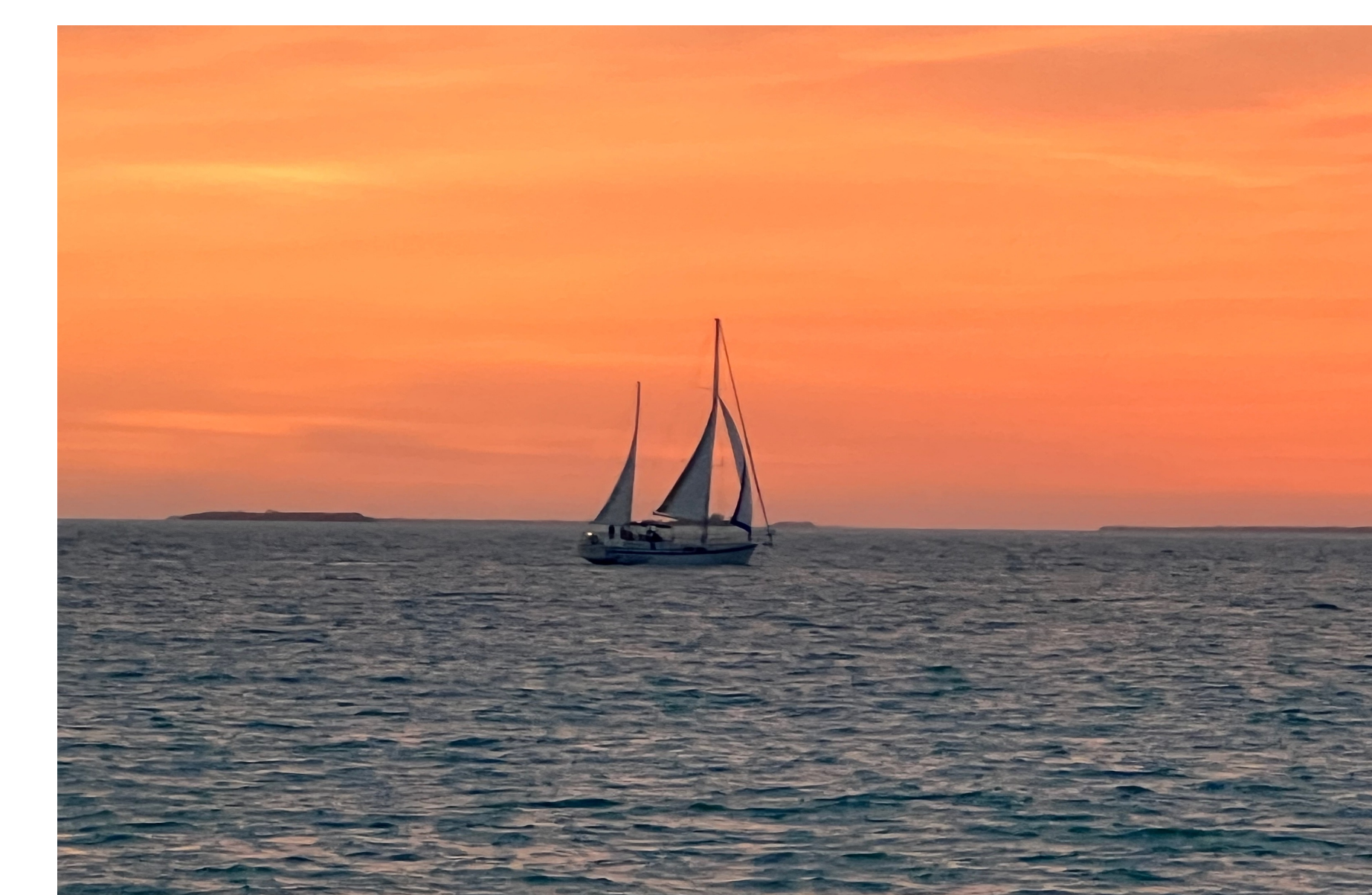
Discussion

Further discussion on themes

- Essence of technology cannot replace human connections
- Hybrid approaches to teaching and learning have potential for impacting clinical reasoning
- The study illuminated aspects of being ready to practice and what that means in the current healthcare landscape
- Gadamer refers to conceptual understandings (horizons) and these perspectives were changed (fusion of horizons) based on past and present experiences with the pandemic in nursing education

Limitations & Further Study

- Generalizability may be limited due to the purposive sample selection and some focus group participants may have been hesitant to share in group settings
- Further research needed in being practice ready and preparing nursing students with a variety of teaching modalities

CONCLUSIONS

- *New horizons were discovered!*
- *There is value to the communal experience*
- *Challenging assumptions in student thinking avoids repetitive, predictable responses as often seen in various technological teaching modalities*
- *The concept of "being in the world" of nursing education was highlighted to emphasize the humanness and interaction needed in nursing education*
- *Assumptions about nursing education were challenged and a great opportunity exists to respond to the next generation of nurses*

REFERENCES

1. Martin, B., Kaminski-Ozturk, N., Smiley, R., Spector, N., Silvestre, J., Bowles, W., Alexander M. (2023). Assessing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Nursing Education: A National Study of Prelicensure RN Programs. *Journal of Nursing Regulation.* https://doi.org/10.1016/S2155-8256(23)00041-8
2. Alsaigh, R., & Coyne, I. (2021). Doing a hermeneutic phenomenology research underpinned by Gadamer's philosophy: A framework to facilitate data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20,* 16094069211047820.

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