Personal Birth Accounts
A Teaching Tool in Maternal Newborn Nursing
Background

- Focused writing assignment in undergraduate maternal newborn nursing course
- Students interview their own mothers about their birth experience
- “What happened the day I was born?”
Purpose

- Personal narratives grounded in the experience of giving birth
- Participatory learning strategy
Method

- Students were given the assignment to learn the story of their birth.
- Open-ended questions focused on: birth setting, coping with labor pain, events, family support, comparison to other birth experiences, personal meaning of the birth experience.
Method

- Following informed consent, birth stories were randomly selected and analyzed.
- Several student focus groups were held to discuss the effect of this assignment on student learning.
Results

Students found it a rewarding and enjoyable experience

“I thought it was really fun to be able to call my mom and find out about what happened when my mom had me”

“It was a very fun and interesting assignment”
Results

Students developed a sense of connectedness and respect for their mothers

- “It was a good experience to talk to my mom about my birth and make that emotional connection”

- “It added a new level of admiration and respect for my mom. She was so joyful and talked about how supportive my dad was. It just gave me a different perspective of my parents”
Results
Discovering their own birth event personalized the maternal/newborn topics in the course

- “It made me more engaged and interested in everything we were learning in class”
- “It helped me pay more attention and focus during lectures”
- “With my mom telling me about it, it gave me a personal connection so when I went to clinical I was looking for things my mom had told me about”
- “My mom had gestational diabetes and I paid more attention to that lecture”
Themes – Role of Nurse

- Significance of healthcare providers' behavior. What was said and done during labor was important, and remembered – both the negative and the positive.

- Students envisioned how they want to provide support and act as nurses when they are in that role.

- This provided an important lesson that may impact their future nursing practice.
Student Responses

“I realized that this is one of the most important times in these new mothers lives and they’re going to remember it forever”

“Hearing it from my mom’s perspective about how important it was for the nurse to be there was something I could take away and be that kind of nurse”

“It made me really aware of what a patient is feeling and that I need to explain to them what is happening”
Themes - Appreciation

- Students repeatedly commented on a greater appreciation for their parents’ sacrifice and love.
- Grateful for opportunity to complete this assignment.
- Students had an increased sense of self-worth hearing the love and devotion their parents had for them as a newborn.
Student Responses

- “Talking about my birth reminds me of how much my mother has done for me”
- “I am very grateful for everything that she went through!”
Themes – Future Birth

- Birth story helped student plan for their own future birth experience
- Empowerment - If mom can do it, then I can!
- Hopeful or fearful based on story of their mother’s experience in childbirth
Results

- Birth stories contributed to student critical thinking and knowledge through discussions in clinical conferences and assignments.
Results

- Birth events raised questions concerning evidence-based practices as they tried to resolve questions concerning their own births
Student Response

“It was a very special experience to hear my own birth story and to hear the emotion my mom still feels when she retells the details of the story of a day so long ago”
Conclusion

- Use of personal birth accounts can be an effective teaching tool in maternal child nursing courses
- Positive outcomes for faculty and students
- Student interest in analytic inquiry is stimulated
- Students have increased motivation to personalize course content based on their personal birth account