

Exploring Standardized Patients' Perspectives on Working with Medical Students

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Background

Standardized Patients (SPs) play an essential role in every medical school in the United States today. Little is known about the reactions of SPs' to working with medical students. Even less is known about whether or how these interactions impact the SPs. A better understanding of the SP-medical student interaction could be useful for screening SPs, supporting SP professional identity formation, and bridging the SP and medical student cultures.

Purpose

Gain a better understanding of the unique perspective of SPs on working with medical students including the SPs' impact on students and the students' impacts on SPs.

Methods

Two researchers, without evaluative relationships with the SPs, conducted 2 one-hour focus group interviews (n=3;n=9) a semi-structured interview protocol. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Three researchers independently analyzed the transcripts to identify clusters of meaning and codes. Codes were grouped into categories and ultimately themes. Use of consensus and triangulation of researchers, prolonged engagement with the data, and presentation of direct quotes helped ensure credibility of the outcomes of this study. (Fig 1.)

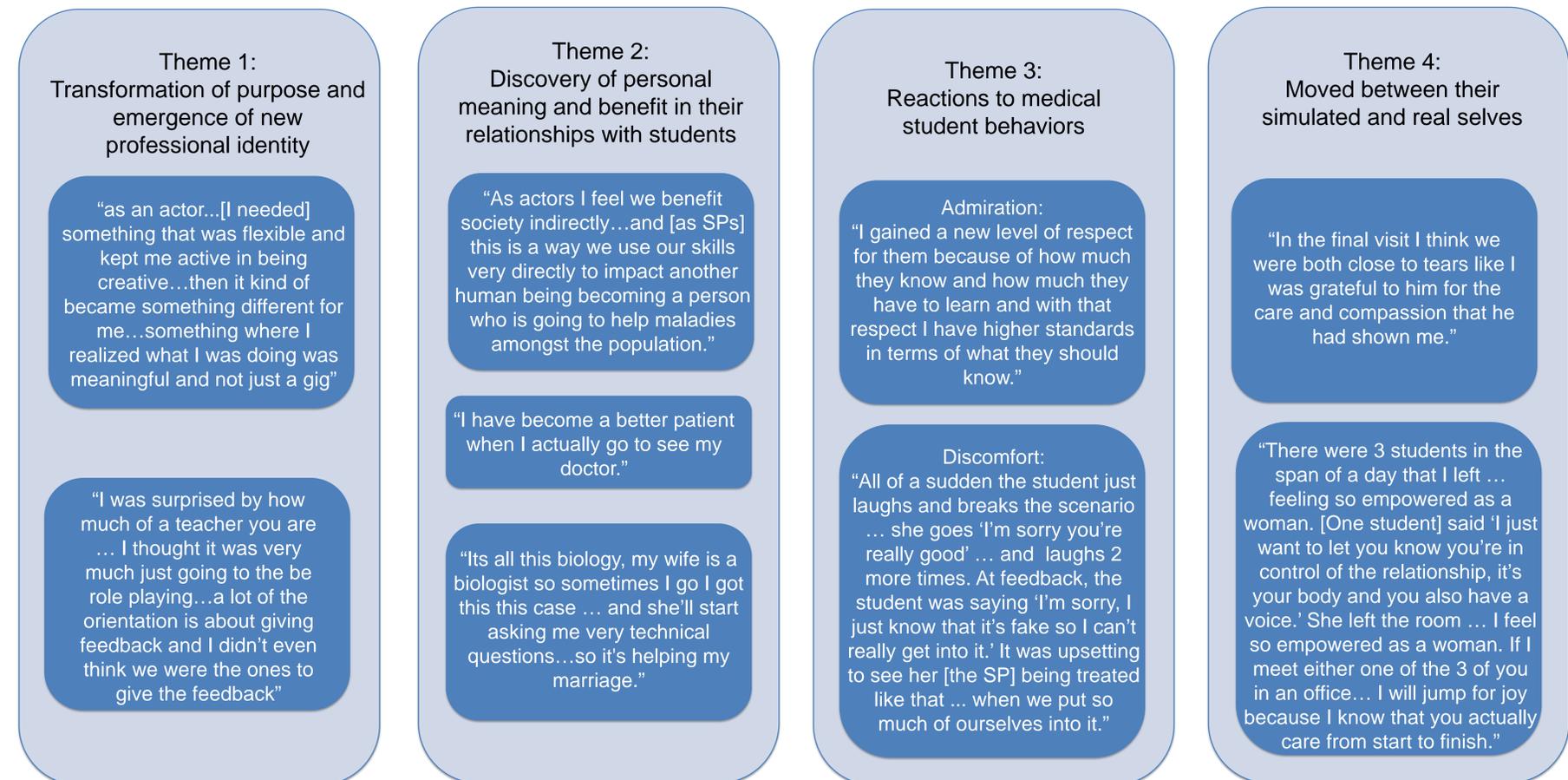


Figure 1: Data Collection Method and Hierarchy

Results

Analysis identified 4 themes:

1. SPs experienced a transformation of purpose and emergence of a new professional identity
2. SPs discovered personal meaning and benefit in their relationships with students
3. SPs shared their reactions to behaviors displayed by various medical students
4. SPs described how they moved between their simulated and real selves



Conclusion

- SPs experienced a professional identity formation process as a teacher and guide that paralleled that of students
- SPs began to view themselves as having a direct impact on society rather than an indirect impact as actors
- The SP perspective may help SP educators nurture this process, reinforce job meaningfulness, and increase recruitment and retention
- The SP perspective may be useful for acclimatizing SPs to the simulation process and to medical educators in training students

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