Transformative Learning During Medical Students' First Longitudinal Clerkship : A Qualitative Study

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Introduction

- 4th year clerkships : first long-lasting (4 months) clinical immersion for medical students at the Lausanne University.

- Starting to act like physicians: source of stress, doubts, and exposure to challenging experiences.

- Clerkships fosters clinical skills, but also exposes to uncertainty and ethical or professionalism dilemmas.

It is actually not known what dilemmas students experience during their first clerkships and what changes in students' perspective these dilemmas produce.

Aim of the study:

The aim of the study is to gain insights into the challenging experiences and dilemmas students face during clerkships and to what learning these experiences lead.
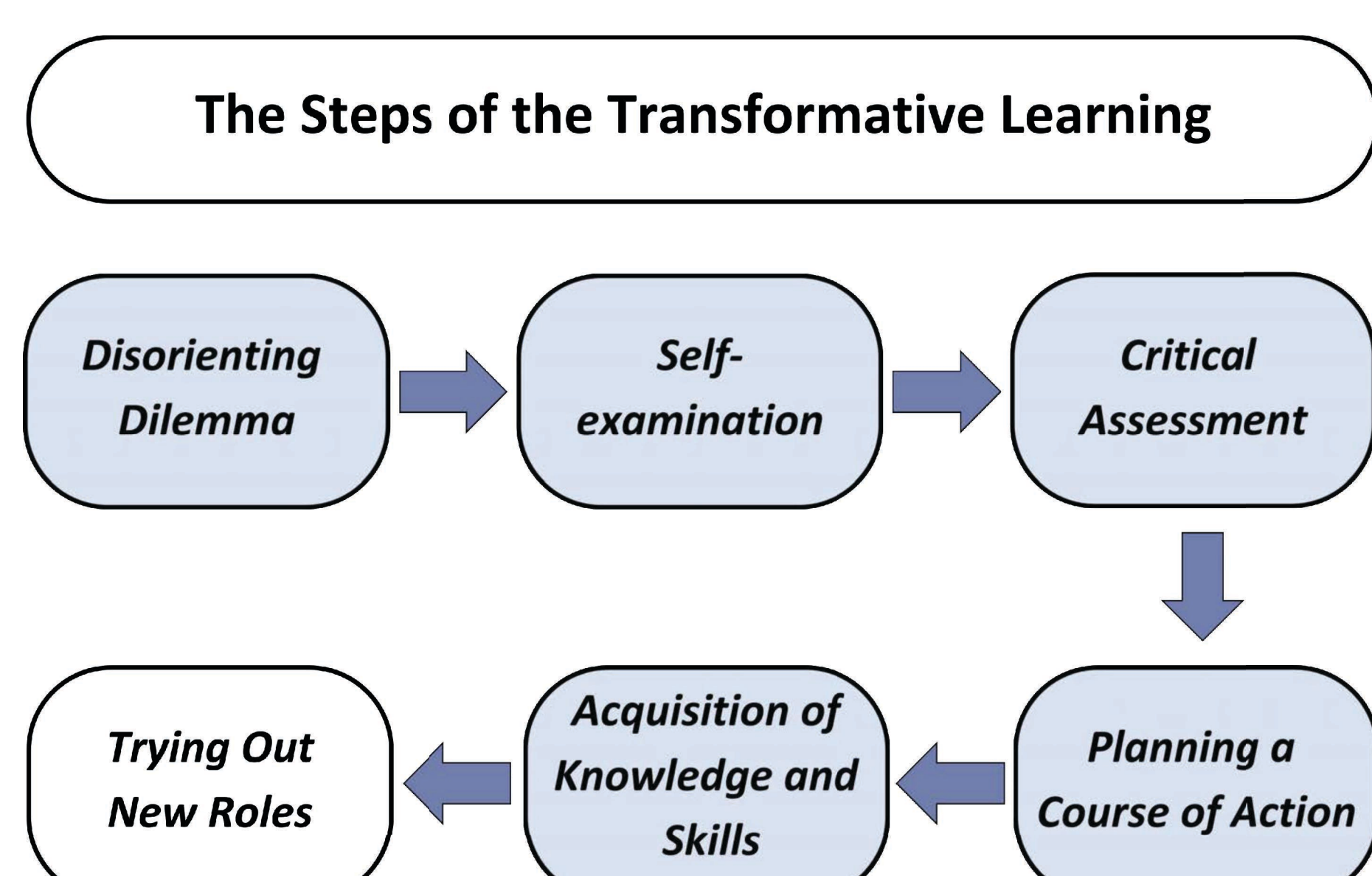
Methods

Since 2021, students have been asked to produce a narrative reflexive report, during 4th year clerkships, guided by 3 questions:

    1. Describe a situation during the clerkship that particularly struck you

    2. Describe the reaction it provoked in you

    3. What lessons can you draw for the future?

- Qualitative Study
- Eligible: all narratives of 4th year students, written between March and August 2022
- Included: anonymised narratives from consenting students
- Theorical framework using *Transformative Learning Theory* (Mezirow)
- Analysis cared on independently by three authors based on an inductive approach using thematic analysis
- Thematic analysis conducted in two phases:
  1. Identification of challenging experiences → disorienting dilemma
  2. Identification of the lessons learned
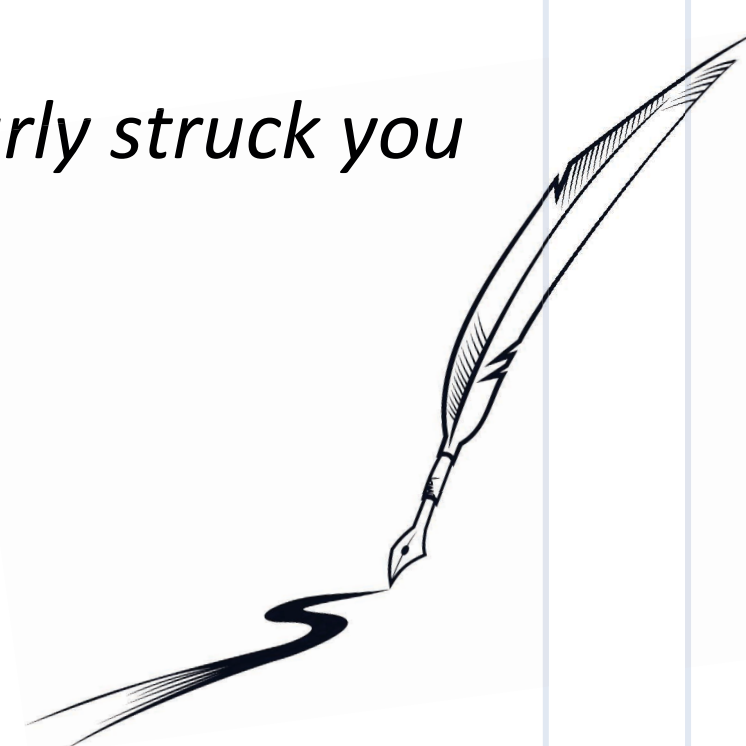
Transformative learning theory assumes that learners can change their views and perspectives on the world as they process new information
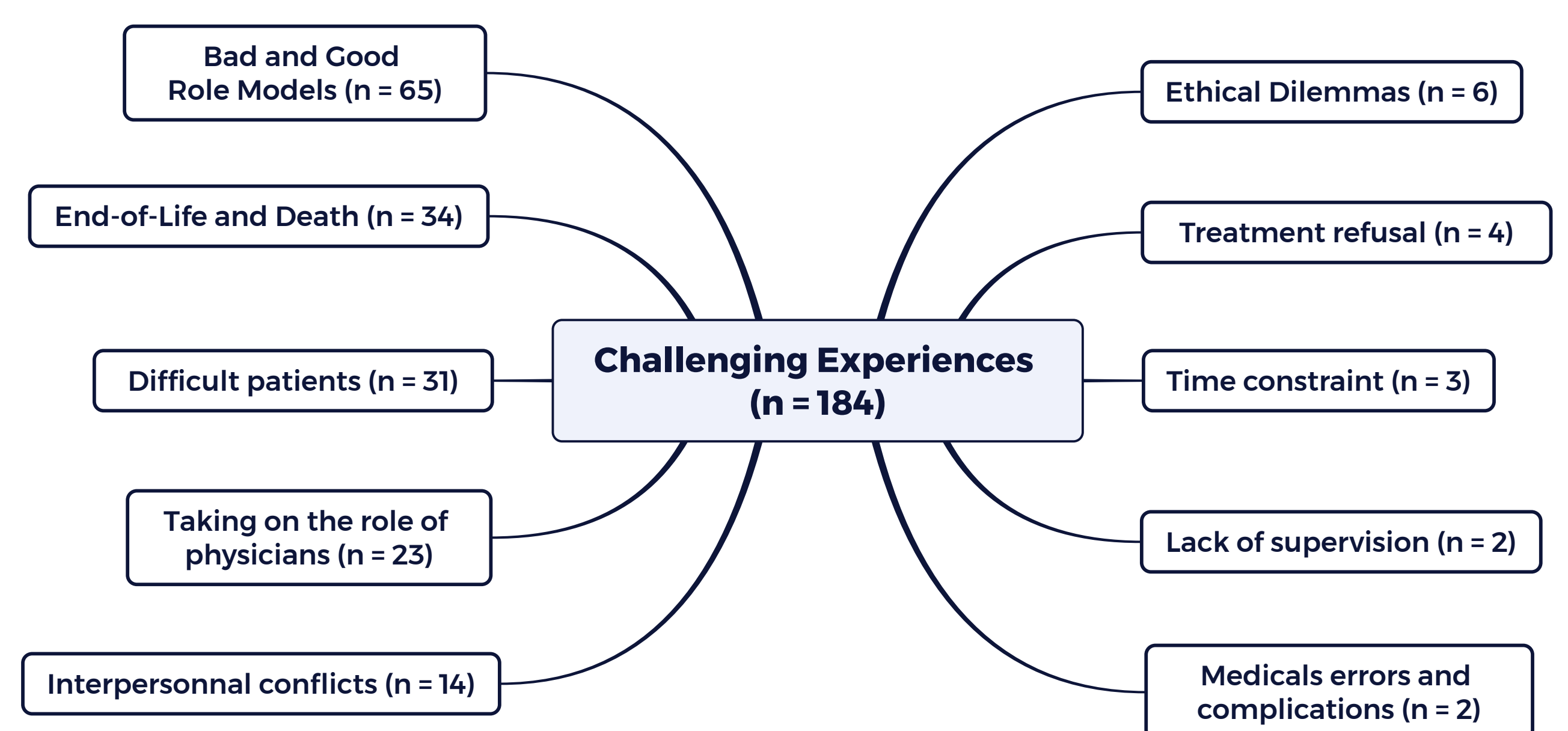
The Steps of the Transformative Learning

Disorienting Dilemma → Self-examination → Critical Assessment → Planning a Course of Action → Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills → Trying Out New Roles

Results

n = 184/191 narratives included in analysis

A) 10 types of challenging experiences leading to disorienting dilemmas

(Uncomfortable or challenging "a-ha" moment where students consider something they may not have understood before)

- Bad and Good Role Models (n = 65)
- End-of-Life and Death (n = 34)
- Difficult patients (n = 31)
- Taking on the role of physicians (n = 23)
- Interpersonnal conflicts (n = 14)

Challenging Experiences (n = 184)

- Ethical Dilemmas (n = 6)
- Treatment refusal (n = 4)
- Time constraint (n = 3)
- Lack of supervision (n = 2)
- Medicals errors and complications (n = 2)

B) 5 categories of learning (where students find that their past thoughts or beliefs may have been inaccurate and have a perspective transformation) **:**

What I learn **about Me** as a future physician:
    1. Finding an emotional balance is important
    2. Acknowledging the limits of medicine

What I learn **about the Profession**:
    3. Importance of humanity in medicine
    4. There are *Do and Don't* in medical practice
    5. Interprofessional collaboration is key

Conclusion

- We identified 10 types of challenging experiences leading to disorienting dilemmas

- Through disorienting dilemmas, students become more open to new thoughts around the *image of self as a professional* and the *image of the profession*

What are the implications for medical educators ?

- The Transformative Learning theory is an appropriate framework to analyse medical students' narratives about their clinical experience

- Our finding will inform training or mentoring activities to help students navigating through the many work-related disrupting experiences

Sources

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