
Letters to the editor

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To the editor:

In response to the Newman, Sime, and Corcoran-Perry article¹ in *Advances in Nursing Science* 14:1 on the focus of the discipline of nursing, and Fawcett's critique of this article,² we offer the following ideas related to the metaparadigm, the nursing discipline focus statement, and the unitary-transformative perspective.

The metaparadigm of nursing, extrapolated by Fawcett,² has been used by nursing since 1984. However, the metaparadigm has recently come under question by nursing scholars in regard to its comprehensiveness and utility.³⁻⁸ The discussion by nursing scholars reflects that sufficient consensus does exist in nursing to support further study of the metaparadigm to stimulate knowledge development within nursing.

As Laudan⁹ suggests, anomalies prompt us to think more clearly about where we are, to investigate doubts about current theories, and exercise caution not to abandon theories without critical appraisal. We are convinced an alteration of the current metaparadigm would enhance our ability to recognize the multiple contextual realities that inform nursing and that are essential to understanding our clients.

We suggest a revised nursing focus statement: "Nursing is the study and practice of caring within contexts of the human health experience," which incorporates the interrelatedness to practice, a component of the domain dimensions proposed by Meleis.⁵ The addition of "contexts" recognizes the environment, which includes, but is not limited to, culture, community, and ecology.

The conceptualizations of caring continue to evolve and crystallize. The concepts of nursing, health, person, and environment are not separate entities, and caring holds the potential to provide interconnectedness for the metaparadigm. The inclusion of caring as a human trait, a moral imperative, an affect, an interpersonal interaction, and a therapeutic intervention¹⁰ within the metaparadigm brings unity among the concepts and improves explication of nursing phenomena.

As a final thought, the unitary-transformative perspective presents new opportunities for the discipline of nursing. Newman et al¹ identified three unique paradigms, each of which are valued for their actual or potential contribution to the knowledgebase of nursing, and each of which have the potential to provide support for the nursing focus statement we have proposed. While caring can be elaborated through each of these paradigms, the full complexity of person with the unitary-transformative perspective becomes known within the context of all experiences. The study of the unfolding of one life will reveal personal knowledge including patterns in the unique helices of the person. This paradigm will allow us to test theories from Rogers, Parse, Newman, and others, and to clarify the appropriateness of central domain concepts within nursing as they apply to individuals. The unitary-transformative perspective will permit study of the threads as well as the fabric of a life.

As doctoral students in the Human Care Nursing course at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, we welcome the opportunity for scholarly discourse on the focus of the discipline of nursing. There is a need for intense, lively conflict and discussion reflecting "that intellectual vigor and rigor are alive in nursing."^{11(p22)} L'Chiam!

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—*Kathy Malloch
Ruby Martinez
Louise Nelson
Betty Predeger
Luise Speakman
Amy Steinbinder
Janet Tracy
Doctoral Candidates
School of Nursing
University of Colorado Health
Sciences Center
Denver, Colorado*

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