Analyzing my View of the Ontology of Nursing

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Abstract

Through Jacqueline Fawcett’s metaparadigm of nursing and critiques of this framework, my ontological view of nursing is discussed. Nursing is more than the skills that are performed, it is providing hope to patients through the act of caring. The four concepts of the metaparadigm are defined, and how influential they are to my ontological stance of caring is addressed. By evaluating my ontological stance using the four concepts of the metaparadigm, and exploring critiques of this framework, the inclusion of caring into the metaparadigm of nursing is made clear. Further discussion surrounding the topic of caring in regards to the metaparadigm is needed, as being an exceptional nurse requires a caring approach and is therefore a critical aspect to the ontology of nursing. The concept of caring is an essential component of nursing, and further research surrounding this topic will continue to be influential toward my ontological view of nursing.

*Keywords*: nursing metaparadigm, ontology of nursing, caring
Reflecting on the question what do I think I know about nursing has given me insight to what my ontological stance of nursing is. By analyzing my view using Fawcett’s metaparadigm of nursing, which includes person, health, environment, and nursing, I will discuss how my ontological stance has been influenced by these four concepts. Furthermore, I will evaluate and discuss critiques of this framework in hopes of gaining new knowledge surrounding this topic to further reflect what nursing is to me.

**My Ontological Stance**

Through my experiences as a nurse, I have seen the effect caring can have on a patient. Davis (2005) indicates that the caring presence a nurse displays can positively impact a patient’s hospital experience (as cited in Adams, 2016). To me nursing is more than the skills we have been taught to perform. Instead, nursing is the caring presence we provide to help bring hope to people when they need it most. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2008) states that the concept of caring in nursing practice is “the nurse’s empathy for, connection to, and being with the patient, as well as the ability to translate these affective characteristics into compassionate, sensitive, and patient-centered care” (as cited in Kim, 2015, p. 46). Nurses are able to establish a connection and begin building the nurse-patient relationship through simple acts of caring. By providing the right touch or a listening ear, a relationship is formed between the nurse and patient, allowing a nurse to bring hope or help the patient find meaning (Perry, 2005).

**Metaparadigm of Nursing**

Jacqueline Fawcett outlines four main concepts in her nursing metaparadigm, which include person, environment, health and nursing (Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2018). Fawcett’s metaparadigm provides a framework for nursing and has influenced my ontological
stance of nursing. The concept of person refers to the individual and their family who interact with the nurse therapeutically (Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2018). Being a nurse is looking beyond a diagnosis, it is caring for an individual in a patient-centered approach, which can provide a sense of comfort through unsettling situations. Instead of labelling or judging a patient, I view the concept of person to be identifying the individual as unique, and caring for them with the knowledge that they have their own needs and desires (Wu, 2008). Fawcett (2000) describes the environment as the place or community in which care is provided (as cited in Wu, 2018). Schim, Benkert, Bell, Walker, and Danford (2007) add that the concept of environment includes both the psychosocial and physical environment. Understanding the concept of environment has allowed me to focus on creating a positive experience for the patient. The environment is much more than a place where care is delivered, rather it has everything to do with the patient and the interactions they have (Wu, 2008). By incorporating a caring approach in nursing, it can provide positive outcomes for the patient and their health. The concept of health is one that is defined by the patient, and the nurse is to be influenced by what the patient believes to be an acceptable level of health (Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2018). This relates back to identifying individuals as unique, as each person views their level of health differently. This ties in with my ontological stance as caring involves supporting the patient in whatever way they prefer (Adams, 2016). Lastly, the concept of nursing includes the direct and indirect actions taken by nurses (Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health, 2018). Nursing practice involves many different forms of actions within the healthcare system (Kim, 2015). However, the actions made by nurses to implement a caring approach have always influenced my ontology of nursing. Thornton mentions that caring has been used to assist with increasing patient and staff satisfaction and decreasing the length of hospital visits (as cited in Adams, 2016). I believe
Fawcett’s concepts of the nursing metaparadigm have influenced my view on nursing, and applying them all into my practice is fundamental in providing a caring approach.

**Critique of the Metaparadigm**

Analyzing and questioning the metaparadigm of nursing assists in developing new knowledge and concepts, which ought to be considered. Bender and Feldman argued the need to make all concepts of the metaparadigm interdependent to begin understanding the dynamics of nursing (as cited in Bender, 2018). I agree that all concepts must be interdependent, especially when focusing on my ontological stance of caring. With the exclusion of one concept, a caring approach would not be achieved. I believe Fawcett’s metaparadigm of nursing is well defined and applicable to nursing practice, however further investigation on this topic may provide benefits to nursing. Thorne (1998) analyzed concepts that were considered vital in nursing, yet were not included in the metaparadigm of nursing, for example caring (as cited in Bender, 2018). Watson also mentioned that a concept of caring should be included in the metaparadigm of nursing (as cited in Adams, 2016). Caring is an essential aspect in nursing, and its inclusion into the metaparadigm should be further discussed. Reviewing critiques surrounding the metaparadigm of nursing allows me to further my knowledge on this topic, and gather new insights into my ontological stance.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting on my ontological stance of nursing has allowed me to evaluate what I believe is the central feature of nursing. Understanding the concepts of Fawcett’s metaparadigm and research surrounding this topic have influenced my stance and will continue to do so. What I think I know about nursing is that it is forever developing with new research, and discussions surrounding past findings. The inclusion of caring into the metaparadigm of nursing is a topic
that warrants further discussion considering exceptional nursing involves a caring approach (Thorne, Canam, Dahinten, Hall, Henderson, & Kirkham, 1998). Analyzing Fawcett’s nursing metaparadigm and reviewing its critiques has allowed me to gather new information to continue evaluating my ontological stance on nursing.
References


