Welcome to Week 3!



In this week, the importance of concepts to nursing practice, as well as theory development, will be examined. An overview is presented about how concepts and relational statements are joined together in order to form a theory. Lastly, several ways that nurses use to analyze a theory for its usefulness and comprehensiveness are presented.

Outcomes, Objectives, and Concepts

| **Course Outcomes** | **Weekly Objectives** | **Main Topics and Concepts** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Demonstrate logical and creative thinking in the analysis and application of a theory to nursing practice. (PO 2 and 5)
2. Examine broad theoretical concepts as foundational to advanced nursing practice roles. (PO 1 and 2)
 | 1. Apply the use of concept analysis to the role of the nurse practitioner (CO 1).
2. Analyze the process of concept development (CO 1).
3. Discuss concepts as foundational to nursing theory development (CO 3).
 | * Concept Analysis
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Learning Success Strategies

* Plan plenty of time in your week to be successful.
* Reach out to your faculty early if you have any questions or concerns or if you are struggling to be successful.
* Review the module outcomes and objectives, this is what you will be expected to learn and what you will be assessed on.
* Review all assignments for the module and ensure you understand your assessments.
* The module readings and learning content contain the information required to help you meet your learning objectives and be successful in your assessments.
* Use available resources to assist with your scholarly writing for this week's worksheet.

Foundations of Nursing Theory



The same thing happens within nursing. Basic concepts, such as caring, pain, and therapeutic communication, provide the foundation for any nursing theory. Once the foundation is laid, consideration is given to the linkages among the various components of the theory. These linkages, or relational statements, provide meaning and structure to the theory. The relational statements describe and explain the function of each component of the theory (Asselin, 2011; Parker & Smith, 2015).

As illustrated, concepts are foundational to any nursing theory (Parker & Smith, 2010). They also are key ingredients within the research process. When the primary investigator (PI) decides on the specific concepts to be studied, these concepts require both a theoretical and operational definition. Providing both definitions enables the PI to describe the concept usage within the study and exactly how it will be measured or operationalized. The question is: Are all concepts universal?

In the opening scenario, we discovered that concepts can and do have multiple meanings for the same group of people. Within nursing, a concept analysis has become an accepted mechanism to assist in defining and operationalizing concepts that are considered to be known by all but are actually not clearly known (Parker & Smith, 2015).

Consider what has happened in the past 40 years with regard to a patient's right to die. In the mid-1970s, Karen Quinlan lapsed into a coma after a party, after which she needed artificial ventilation. In her vegetative state, she continued to need ventilatory assistance, and her parents eventually requested the removal of the ventilator. It was a nurse who questioned this, and the parents received a court order allowing the removal of the ventilator. Quinlan lived for an additional 9 years. Subsequently, this incident sparked much legal and ethical debate, so that by the mid-1990s, the American public assumed a right to all extraordinary measures, and the medical community needed a definition of a concept called medical futility.

Though medical futility began to enter the literature in the mid-1990s, there was no clear definition or measure for this concept. Nurses (and other healthcare providers) could clearly explain the futility of continuing to use unsuccessful treatments, such as antibiotics or pain medication, but to remove such things as artificial ventilation was a level of care many were unable to clearly delineate. Eventually, a concept analysis was published that clearly defined medical futility, along with contributing factors and empirical indicators. The concept analysis clearly defined antecedents (what comes before) and the consequences of the concept (Parker & Smith, 2015; Walker & Avant, 2011). For medical futility, some of the antecedents were catastrophic events leading to irreversible total body failure, including such things as the absence of any voluntary responses, including breathing. The consequence of medical futility is death, but it is the physiological process, not an active intervention on the part of any healthcare provider, that leads to that consequence.

**Reflection**

Now consider the current knowledge and technology explosion that has created formation of new concepts such as meaningful use, usability, virtual learning environment, and resilience (nurse and/or patient). What are other new concepts in nursing?

Concept Analysis



A concept analysis is a structured process of examining a complex concept in order to determine a mutual understanding within an applied context. Concept analysis is used to make sense of concepts foundational to theory development. There are several different methods for conducting a concept analysis; however most methods share common process steps.

**Concept Analysis**

Click on the interactive to learn more about concept analysis.



[Concept Analysis (Links to an external site.)](https://lms.courselearn.net/lms/CourseExport/manual/interactives/CU/NR501/NR501_W3_Concept_Analysis/story_html5.html)

[Transcript](https://chamberlain.instructure.com/courses/65025/pages/week-3-concept-analysis?module_item_id=8752455)

**Select a Concept**
According to Walker and Avant (2011) the first step of concept analysis is to select a concept of interest. For example, a nurse leader wants to learn about transformational leadership. The leader selects the concept of empowerment to analyze in order to build on his or her understanding of the transformational theory.

**Determine the Aim or Purpose of the Analysis**
The next step is to consider the aims of the analysis. For the nurse leader, the aims of the concept analysis is to gain a broader understanding of leadership styles and how the concept of empowerment plays an integral link to better nursing satisfaction and retention, as well as being a transformational leader. The leader also can consider whether there are purposes in nursing practice for the analysis of the concept of empowerment. The nurse leader might want to differentiate between jargon, casual use, and scientific discourse on the concept (Walker & Avant, 2011).

**Identify all Uses of the Concept**
Ways to identify all the uses of a concept include using dictionaries, colleagues, thesauruses, and the scholarly peer reviewed literature. It is important for the nurse leader to keep an open mind at this point and avoid the limitation of only one perspective on the concept of empowerment (Walker & Avant, 2011). The nurse leader should go beyond healthcare resources and explore scholarly literature for various domains of knowledge and professions. If the nurse leader finds many uses and a lot of variation of empowerment, the nurse leader may need to reflect again on the aims and purposes of the concept analysis to identify a specific focus.

**Determine and Define Attributes**
The next step in concept analysis is to define the attributes as characteristics or descriptors. This is one of the most important parts of the analysis. The nurse leader can take notes on attributes or the various concept uses of empowerment—attributes that capture his or her attention and are geared toward transformational leadership, such as self-actualization, enablement, and promoting influence. The nurse leader’s goal is to nail down a minimum set of attributes to be able to distinguish this concept from similar concepts (Walker & Avant, 2011).

**Identify a Model Case**
A model case illustrates or exemplifies the concept, including demonstration of all defining attributes (Walker & Avant, 2011). In this step of the analysis, the nurse leader is aiming for an example that clearly shows the concept of empowerment, without confusing or distracting elements. For example, the nurse leader can identify a model case to illustrate the concept of empowerment by demonstrating how nurses of an acute-care unit have been engaged in making decisions related to various supplies used on the unit versus those decisions made by senior leadership.

**Identify Borderline, Related, Contrary, Invented, and Illegitimate Cases**
Regardless of the preferred method of concept analysis, the building of cases further illustrates the utility of a specific concept. A common case that is used is the model case, which exactly illustrates the concept in usage. Other types of cases are: similar (parallel or similar, not identical), illegitimate (uses the concept in an exact opposite or contrary manner), and imaginary (using the concept in a new and unusual way). Initially, learning how to construct cases to further illustrate a concept can seem forced or even difficult, but it really becomes a fun exercise, which ultimately provides clarity and meaning (Parker & Smith, 2015; Walker & Avant, 2011).

**Identify Antecedents and Consequences**
An antecedent takes place or precedes an instance of a concept.  The outcomes or results of an instance of a concept are the consequences. A defining attribute cannot be an antecedent or a consequence of the target concept (Walker & Avant, 2011). At this point, the nurse leader must consider situations, events, environments, or other contexts that must exist before the concept of empowerment can be present. What must exist before attachment occurs? For instance, nurses must feel safe in their environments, their voice counts, and senior leadership will listen before being able to feel the influence of empowerment. The outcomes or results of an instance of a concept are the consequences.

**Define Empirical Referents**
The nurse leader has reached the final step. How is the concept of empowerment measured? How do you demonstrate the concept exists or is present? An empirical referent serves as a way to establish this existence. This is done through measuring the defining attributes. Often, the attributes and referents are the same thing. With more abstract concepts, defining attributes are more abstract and harder to capture empirically. For the nurse leader, empowerment can be empirically measured through nurse satisfaction levels, retention rates, and vacancy rates.

Summary

Concepts provide the foundation for theory development. Concept analysis is a structured process used to gain insights and new perspectives, to define or clarify a concept for mutual understanding, to provide meaning to a nursing theory, and to provide a framework for application of a concept to practice.

Concept is a powerful tool that assist in providing clarity for our nursing practice. As stated by Melnyk and Fineout-Overholt (2011) and McEwen and Willis (2014), concept is one of the vehicles used to demonstrate to others key components of our profession. Although a concept analysis may appear cumbersome to use at times, the ultimate goal is a shared language among nurses.

Key Points

* Concepts are essential to theory development
* Using the process of concept analysis allows for new understanding of application of theory