

Chapter 5

Applying Appropriate Theories and Conceptual Models

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Applying Appropriate Theories and Conceptual Models

- **Theory**
 - Organized and systematic set of related statements (concepts) that explain the nature of relationships and existing phenomena (fact or observable occurrence).
 - Provides meaning to a set of complex observations and facts
- What is the primary function of theory?
- What purpose does a theory serve?
- How do researchers use a Theoretical Framework/Model?

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Overview of Theory

- Theory needed to integrate, organize, and classify accumulated fact into meaningful patterns
- Many fields of inquiry contribute to development of nursing knowledge
- Allows researchers to make general statements about variables and the relationships among variables

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Overview of Theory (cont'd)

- Theories serve several purposes in development of science and clinical practice
 - Summarize existing knowledge
 - Give meaning to isolated empirical findings
 - Provides structure or framework that provides systematic means of collecting data to describe, explain, and predict nursing practice
 - Theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and conceptual model used interchangeably

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Inductive vs. Deductive Approach

- **Discovering new knowledge** (Fig. 5.1 p. 104)
 - **Inductive:** collecting observations that lead to conclusions; begins with collecting specific observations and moving to more general statements
 - **Deductive:** generates theory by beginning with known facts moving from general to more specific



<http://www.designorate.com/inductive-reasoning-in-user-experience-research/>

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Inductive Versus Deductive Approach

- Two approaches to discovering or testing new knowledge
- Inductive approach
 - Involves collecting observations that lead to conclusions or hypotheses
 - Begins with specific observation and moves to testable, general statements
 - Underlies qualitative approach to inquiry

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Inductive Versus Deductive Approach (cont'd)

- Deductive approach
 - Generates theory by beginning with known facts and moving from the general to the specific
 - Used to test predictions and validate existing relationships
 - Helps unveil existing relationships
 - Not all deductions can be verified, particularly when methods of measurement are inadequate or underdeveloped

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Classification of Theories in Nursing

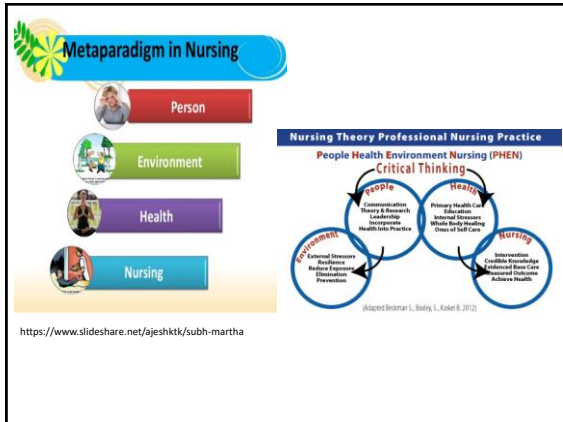
- Nursing theory is a specific and concrete set of concepts and propositions that claim to account for or characterize phenomena of interest to discipline of nursing
- Metaparadigm refers to primary phenomena of interest to discipline
 - Person
 - Environment
 - Health
 - Nursing

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Classification of Theories in Nursing "Metaparadigm"

- Refers to phenomena that are of interest to a particular discipline. Primary phenomena within nursing include **4 metaparadigm concepts**: (Table 5.1, p. 105)
 - **Person**- individuals, families, communities, other groups who are participants in health care
 - **Environment**- significant other and physical surroundings (e.g., local, regional, national, cultural, social, political, or economic)
 - **Health**- state of well-being at the time that nursing occurs (e.g., wellness to terminal illness)
 - **Nursing**- the action taken by nurses on behalf of or in conjunction with the person, and the goals or outcomes of nursing actions (e.g. nursing process)

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Grand Theories

- Complex and broad in scope
- Attempt to explain broad scopes and include numerous concepts that are not well-defined
- Not grounded in empirical data
- Uses of a systems approach that focuses on human needs of protection or stress relief central to this discipline
- Examples of grand theories

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Middle-Range Theories

- First introduced in sociology in late 1960s
- Appropriate for defining or refining substantive component of nursing science and practice
- Describe, explain, and predict phenomena
- Explicit and testable
- Organized, limited scope, contain fewer concepts/variables than grand theories
- Gained popularity in last decade because they are more specific than grand theories

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Practice Theories

- Sometimes referred to as prescriptive theories
- More specific than middle-range theories and produce specific directions or guidelines for practice
- Can cover particular element of specialty
- Typically describe elements of nursing care
- Contain few concepts, are easily understandable
- Narrow in scope, limited to specific populations

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Borrowed Theories

- Based on theoretical work from other disciplines, such as sociology
- Theories are taken from other disciplines and applied to nursing questions and research problems
- Useful if the fit and relevance to nursing are clarified

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Levels of Theory

Examples:

- **Grand Theory** (e.g., Roy's Adaptation Model and Watson's Theory of Human Caring) Table 5.2
- **Middle-Range Theory** (e.g., Pender's Health Promotion Model and Eakes' Theory of Chronic Sorrow) Table 5.3
- **Practice Theory** (e.g., Theories of End-of-Life Decision Making) Table 5.4
- **Borrowed Theory** (e.g., Role Theory; Feminist Theory) Table 5.5

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Building Blocks of Theory

- **Concepts:** Symbolic statements describing a phenomenon or class of phenomena (e.g., play, food, or mother)
 - **Theoretical definition vs. operational definition**
- **Phenomena (concept description):** Vary in level of abstraction from high abstract (e.g., hope, love, empowerment) to relatively concrete (e.g., pain, blood loss, temperature)
- **Constructs:** an idea or theory containing various conceptual elements, typically one considered to be subjective and not based on empirical evidence (e.g., building, bridge, argument, motivation, intelligence, anxiety)

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Concepts

- Building blocks of a theory
- Defined and understood within theory of which they are a part
- Symbolic statements describing phenomenon or class or phenomena
- Vary in levels of abstraction
- Formulated in words that enable people to communicate meanings about realities

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Conceptual Framework/Models

- **Conceptual framework/model**
 - Set of abstract and general concepts loosely structured that: (1) deal with abstractions, assembled in a coherent scheme, (2) represent a less formal attempt to explain phenomena than theories, and (3) do not have formal propositions about relationships among phenomena.
 - Often used interchangeably with the terms theoretical framework or conceptual model

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Conceptual Models

- Synonymous with terms such as conceptual framework and conceptual system
- Represent ideas or notions put together in unique way to describe particular area of concern
- Idea of experiencing the world "by walking in someone else's shoes"
- Loosely structure compared with other theories, but provide framework for communicating particular perception of world

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Conceptual Models of Nursing

- Provide direction for study
- Present nursing in relation to four central metaparadigm concepts
- Utilizing nursing model allows researcher to view study from nursing perspective from the beginning
- Conceptual nursing models frame the way nursing will be viewed and the direction research study will take

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