

This comprehensive summary details the evolution of nursing as a discipline and a profession, focusing on the historical views of science, the metaparadigms of nursing, and the various classifications of nursing theories.

I. Historical Evolution of Nursing Knowledge

The search for specialized nursing knowledge has progressed through several distinct eras 1:

- **Curriculum Era (1900-1940s):** Focused on what content student nurses should study to become standardized for diploma programs 1.
- **Research Era (1950-1970s):** Explored the focus of nursing research and the role of nurses in conducting it 1.
- **Graduate Education Era (1950-1970s):** Carved out an advanced role for nursing practice and focused on knowledge development 1.
- **Theory Era (1980-1990s):** Shifted the focus to the patient and established frameworks to guide research and practice 1.
- **Theory Utilization Era (21st Century):** Emphasizes using theory to produce evidence-based knowledge for quality care 1.

II. Philosophical Foundations of Science

Scientific knowledge in nursing is rooted in **epistemology**, which is the theory of knowledge in philosophical inquiry 2. Historically, two competing foundations have existed:

- **Rationalism:** Emphasizes the **power of reason** and **a priori reasoning** (knowledge gained before experience) 3, 4. It utilizes **deductive logic** (general to specific) and is described as a "theory-then-research" strategy 3, 4.
- **Empiricism:** Based on the idea that knowledge is derived only from **sensory experience** (seeing, feeling, hearing) 5. It utilizes the **inductive method** (specific to general) and is a "research-then-theory" strategy 4, 5.
- **Early 20th Century Views: Positivism** emerged as the dominant view, where scientific knowledge was equated to empirical (deductive) and logical (inductive) research 6.
- **Late 20th Century Views:** New perspectives challenged the positivist position, offering more critical analyses of how knowledge is formed in human sciences 7.

III. The Nursing Metaparadigm

A **metaparadigm** consists of the global concepts that identify the phenomenon of central interest to a discipline 8. The four core concepts in nursing are 9:

1. **Person:** The recipient of care, including individuals, families, and communities 9. Care is **holistic** (focused on the whole person) and **individualized** to their changing needs 10.
2. **Environment:** The internal and external surroundings that affect the client 9. This includes **physical** (cleanliness, safety), **social** (support systems), **cultural** (beliefs), **economic** (financial status), and **psychological** (emotional health) factors 11, 12.
3. **Health:** Defined as the degree of **wellness or well-being** experienced by the client 9. It encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and sometimes spiritual health 13.

4. **Nursing:** The attributes and actions of the nurse providing care 9. Key ideas include being **scientific** (based on research), **compassionate** (empathy), **collaborative**, and acting as an **advocate** for patient rights 14. Practice aims at promoting health, preventing illness, and supporting a peaceful death 15.

IV. Classifications of Nursing Theories

Nursing theories are categorized by their scope and purpose:

- **Grand Nursing Theories:** Broad, abstract, and comprehensive (e.g., Sister Callista Roy's Adaptation Model, Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment) 16.
- **Middle-Range Nursing Theories:** More specific and focused than grand theories (e.g., Katharine Kolcaba's Theory of Comfort, Patricia Benner's Novice to Expert Model) 17, 18.
- **Descriptive Nursing Theories:** Observe, document, and explain nursing phenomena (e.g., Dorothy Johnson's Behavioral System Model, Afaf Meleis' Transition Theory) 19, 20.
- **Prescriptive Nursing Theories:** Prescribe specific interventions or actions to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., Nola Pender's Health Promotion Model, Dorothea Orem's Self-care Deficit Theory) 21.
- **Borrowed or Shared Theories:** Frameworks taken from other disciplines, such as **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** from psychology or **System's Theory** from systems science 22.

Important Notes

- **Discipline vs. Profession:** A **discipline** is a branch of education or domain of knowledge, while a **profession** is a specialized field of practice founded upon that theoretical structure 23.
- **Importance of Theory in Education:** It facilitates **conceptual learning**, helps students develop a **professional identity**, and stimulates **critical thinking** 24.
- **Importance in Research:** Theories provide **conceptual clarity** and a common language, allowing researchers to test hypotheses and refine existing knowledge 25.
- **Importance in Clinical Practice:** Theories enhance patient care, promote **holistic care**, and improve communication 26.
- **Community Development:** Theories inform efforts to address the **social determinants of health** and reduce health disparities within populations 27.