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Pamela G. Reed, PhD; RN; FAAN – Contributing Editor

Translating Nursing Philosophy for Practice and Healthcare Policy (introductory article)

Pamela G. Reed, RN; PhD; FAAN

The unitary paradigm represents a distinct nursing perspective about human beings and health, environment, and health-related practices. It is expressed more often in philosophical or theoretical terms than in practical applications. However, there is an urgency to move this philosophical view into mainstream nursing practice and the broader healthcare system. Toward this end, the authors of the feature article below propose unitary paradigm-based policies for practice as derived from a set of six principles synthesized from caring science and integrative nursing.

A unitary ontology in nursing refers to the holistic nature of human beings, described as more than the sum of parts and integral with the environment in a process of ongoing and innovative change. This view incorporates an emphasis on human patterning and on living systems' inherent wholeness and potential for organization amidst increasing complexity. The unitary perspective was originally articulated by Rogers (1970) in her conception of nursing in an introduction to the theoretical basis of her science of unitary human beings. The unitary view was later formalized as a paradigm, the *unitary-transformative paradigm* (Newman, Sime, Corcoran-Perry, 1991), and is now more often referred to by the broader term, unitary paradigm. This perspective recently has been applied to progressive practices such as, for

example, unitary appreciative inquiry (Cowling & Repede, 2010) and emancipatory practice (Kagan, Smith, Cowling, & Chinn, 2009).

Several writers (e.g. Cowling, 1994, Reed, 1997) distinguished Rogers' (1970, 1990) unitary view of holism from more common additive views of holism. Nevertheless, nursing theorists have interpreted the unitary paradigm in distinct ways, for example as Rogers' person-environment process, Parse's human universe connectedness, Watson's bodymindspirit, as well as other nursing theorists' biopsychosocial view of holism. In addition, concepts such as relationship-based care, caring, health-as-wholeness, and healing-as-transformative addressed in the article below, display the depth and diversity of the unitary paradigm in nursing. .

Clinical manifestations of the unitary perspective are evident across nursing practices from Nightingalean to Rogerian science, and as nursing science continues to evolve. The authors of the article below present contemporary clinical manifestations of the unitary view, organized under each of their 6 principles of integrative nursing. By 'clinical' I mean "direct involvement with and/or observation of human beings" (Berg, 1993 cited in Diers, 1995), including reflection on one's own interactions and participation in the context of healthcare. Clinical manifestations may be subtle or explicit in their expression of underlying philosophical values and beliefs.

The authors also identify policy implications derived from each principle. Their policy recommendations propose healthcare practices and environments needed to sustain healing systems of care for individuals, families, groups and communities. The policy recommendations also identify important areas for continued research to provide scientific support for unitary-based practices. Koithan, Kreitzer, and Watson give us a creative synthesis of human caring and

human healing in proposing a unitary-based model of integrative nursing practice. By their work, we may leap from cherished philosophical views into praxis through policies that empower individuals and systems to enact unitary views in everyday practices of nursing.

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