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## From Theory to Practice

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Nursing as a profession is distinct from other medical fields and thus has a distinct body of knowledge that has its own unique perspective and applications. To provide structure and a framework for that knowledge as specific to nursing, as well as the basis for developing future knowledge, nursing has four distinct levels of theory (Higgins & Moore, 2003). Meta and grand theories are highly abstract but encompass large if not all portions of nursing practice since they attempt to explain general phenomena, but middle-range and micro-range are more specific and have more direct correlations to daily practice (Higgins & Moore). Middle-range theories specifically are general enough to be applicable to various clinical populations but still address similar phenomena with guidelines for practice and research (Higgins & Moore). This paper will focus on Watson's middle-range theory of Human Caring and how the theoretical, philosophical, and practical interplay in the context of midwifery with adolescents.

Watson's Philosophy, Science and Theory of Human Caring has continued to evolve and has been applied to a community and health perspective rather than the typical individualistic disease focused models (Rafael, 2000). Watson's theory is distinctive in that it acknowledges the unique mind, body, and spirit dimensions and the experiences of both the patient and nurse that interact and affect nursing care, but still stressing that these aspects need to be understood but must not replace the wholeness or holistic view of the person (Rafael). This theory views harmony between the mind, body, and spirit as the basis for health and different environments as highly influential; these aspects are the framework for a community health nursing perspective (Rafael). This theory is useful in that it does not focus on disease in the community as the basis for health promotion, and provides the structure for supportive physical, sociocultural, spiritual, and political environments (Rafael).

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I believe community is important to understand as it is the context of a person's life. Community and especially sociocultural considerations impacts decisions and the extent to which nursing education and interventions are sustained by an individual. Providing contextual and holistic care takes into account the community environment and beliefs and values of the individuals that surround the patient.

Watson's theory can be very useful for a midwife in dealing with pregnant adolescents and their experiences and needs during labor and delivery. Considering the community that a pregnant adolescent is living in will influence educational support, follow-up needs, and especially ways of relating during the labor and delivery stages of birth. Adolescents prefer the nurse to be a "therapeutic mentor" rather than detached or treating them as an equal or peer (Low, Martin, Sampsel, Guthrie, & Oakley, 2003). Also, Low et al, identified that the presence of a support system during the birthing process is an important factor in determining if the experience is positive or not. Therefore, it is important for the midwife to be able to understand and facilitate the presence of a support system during birthing. Furthermore, providing education to the adolescent is important, but also ensuring the community and support system has accurate information and an accepting attitude of the pregnancy is important for the immediate and long-term emotional needs of the teen. Another issue that was identified as important to the adolescents was that of concern for the responsibilities that are suddenly thrust on the teen, and facilitating harmonious relationships and communication between the teen and the support system and peers is an important consideration for the midwife (Low et al.). Lastly, the Theory of Human Caring identifies the importance of the experiences of both the patient and the nurse, and Low et al. also identified the attitude of the health care provider as essential in determining how the birthing experience is perceived (Rafael, 2000). Labor and delivery were negatively

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influenced if the attitude of the nurse was judgmental or failed to provide the adolescent with the desired mentoring, education, and guidance; thus underscoring the importance of relying on accurate knowledge of adolescent needs and creating a supportive environment. Therefore, midwives should consciously include parents and peers of the adolescent in teaching and the decisions throughout the birthing process.

Watson's theory encompasses the influences of context and community, and was originally created specifically for the individual but also has the flexibility of application to a more communal aspect (Rafael, 2000). Also, this is a model that allows for advances in nursing practice even from a well perspective, which is usually the context for pregnancy (Rafael, Low et al., 2003). The theory acknowledges the impact of both the patient and nurse's experiences and beliefs as important in determining care, and also advocates that harmony between the different relationships is vital for health (Rafael). This has also been sustained by the study done by Low et al. and is consistent with adolescent needs. This theory is useful as a basis for health promotion and education activities within the community that would encourage positive attitudes within the community and knowledge of what types of support are important for pregnant teens.

A weakness applying the Human Caring theory to the birthing experience of adolescents is the lack of time to explore the needs of the mind, body, and spirit dimensions throughout labor and deliver since the teen does not usually deem prenatal classes as important and tends to plan very little for the labor experience (Low et al., 2003). The lack of planning and lack of educational resources on the part of the teen makes community integration more challenging for the midwife. Overall, Watson's theory of Human Caring can be used in various ways to guide the practice of midwives with pregnant teens, but further research would strengthen the effectiveness of the interventions.

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