

UPDATING THE RURAL NURSING THEORY BASE

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

“Sparsely populated areas: Toward nursing theory” was the title of a 1982 symposium at the Western Council on Higher Education for Nursing (now Western Institute of Nursing). In her introductory remarks, Montana State University-Bozeman (MSU-B) College of Nursing Dean Anna Shannon stated that the presentation would demonstrate how a school could “maximize its resources, provide opportunities for faculty and student research and contribute . . . to the development of an empirically based theory of rural nursing” (pp. 70–71). She noted a lack of literature and research about rural nursing and the infrequent inclusion of environment within nursing theories.

Faculty and graduate students’ studies about (a) the role of distance in home dialysis, (b) sodium in drinking water and adolescent blood pressure, and (c) beliefs and practices of Crow Indian women, Hmong refugees, and Hutterite colony members were presented within the symposium. Concluding remarks included a plan for theory construction and testing using retroduction, a process involving both inductive and deductive reasoning. Theory development activity continued at MSU-B College of Nursing, resulting in this text’s seminal article (see Chapter 1, “Rural Nursing: Developing the Theory Base”).

Our present chapter includes a summary of the rural nursing theory structure explicated by [Long and Weinert in 1989](#) and a review of the literature supporting or refuting the viability of the theoretical statements and concepts. Based on the review, we propose changes in the rural nursing theory structure and make suggestions for future work.