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The Colors of Paradigms and Perspectives: Recognizing Complexities, Contentions, and Transitions

Truth exists without question, but where and how to find it remains a challenge. In the course of history, people have been in a continuous quest to discover reality and meaning in existence, which is based on how the world actually is. In the realm of nursing, our scientific exploration has sparked evolution of paradigms and perspectives leading to processes of emerging complexities, contentions, and transitions throughout the previous decades. This paper aims to present my reflection on the development of paradigms and perspectives as a result of this unending academic expedition.

In my seven years of work in the academe, I have always been passionate about human development, whose ultimate aim is to promote competency development that is appropriate and responds to the needs of the society. Working as an instructor in a university also opened up doors of opportunities and great challenges that allowed me to see beyond the world of nursing. Performing university functions together with those working in other disciplines and professionals in various areas of expertise provided rays of enlightenment in terms of commonalities and differences in knowledge. I view this as an opportunity for nursing to flourish given its current status as it seeks more independence in terms of establishing a strong and distinct theoretical foundation. Challenges among nurse scholars has been present for the past decades, but the recognition of these challenges can be the key to future developments that will enable continuous growth of knowledge base amidst the challenges.

Nursing during the early times relied primarily on the fields of medicine and natural sciences. In the succeeding decades, most nurse scholars and nurse scientists have leaned on the positivist paradigm or the natural science model in their attempts to provide credible and acceptable contributions to this enlarging knowledge base. Positivism contends that the process of seeking new information is through the scientific method, and believes in one truth that can be searched best using an objective way (Holloway & Galvin, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The use of positivism in contributing to nursing science continues and is still evident until today. In

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many scientific gatherings, such as conferences, we often see nurse scholars whose research undertakings follow a positivist's paradigm. This can be especially true for many multidisciplinary colloquia where the natural sciences usually dominate the research stage. It appears that the natural sciences still have a strong influence in research undertakings among nurses. Looking at the current nursing curriculum, much of the theoretical foundations being inculcated, particularly among bachelor's degree students, come from those offered by the natural sciences. The knowledge provided by these disciplines are beneficial and indispensable. However, careful understanding of the relationship of knowledge offered by these disciplines and nursing should be considered. This yields better directions in terms of augmenting the science and art of nursing (Whittemore, 1999).

On the other hand, several scholars presented arguments that question the propriety and adequacy of positivism to nursing. It has been criticized in its attempt to provide an objective explanation of a social world – a world made up of subjective interpretations and context (Holloway & Galvin, 2017; Munhall, 2012). This makes human science an area of concern. Cody & Mitchell (2002) presented the lack of growth in terms of knowledge in the human sciences that “imperils nursing as a practice of being with, witnessing, and co-creating quality of life, lived by nurses” (p. 4). I see this as an important issue that necessitates continued attention among scholars. In the practice of our profession, interactions happen between us and our clientele, where we both address issues of health which are values based on the context of our clientele. This proves that our practice is basically grounded on human science that requires appreciation, recognition and utilization of relativistic ontology to capture the indispensable truths (Giorgi, 2005; Silva & Rothhart, 1984). It creates relevant nursing frameworks that are multi-dimensional and flexible to human needs that are context-bound and never static.

The overwhelming complexities in the search for truth and knowledge, particularly in nursing, precipitated continuous changes and evolution of ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axial perspectives. With the advent of criticisms against positivism, several other paradigms emerged, such as postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, and participatory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). These paradigms show their flexibilities. Moreover, they provide context-dependent approaches to research undertakings; thus, enhancing validity of results and acceptance to the scientific arena. Most of the transitions and emergence of these paradigms are results of a socio-political stance, considered to have come into existence because of appreciating the nature of human sciences.

Perhaps the latest contention was whether methods from the positivist paradigm, which concern quantitative types, and interpretivism, which is mostly qualitative, can be combined in one scientific undertaking known as mixed methods. The focus of

paradigms at the time was just to determine how one's strengths complements the other's weaknesses. As these paradigms become more and more mature, flexible, and modern, I see this to be no longer a question of which paradigm is more acceptable, but which of the paradigms would best fit the philosophical questions that need answering.

Asking questions has always been part of our lives. It is human nature that finds meaning in existence throughout existence. The great evolution of paradigms and perspectives exists throughout time. Nursing as both science and art is a world full of complexities that involve a network of relationships between disciplines of humanities and natural sciences. Its quest for having an exhaustive, all-inclusive, and distinct knowledge base brought contentions between several intellects. These academic exchanges of arguments and positions have facilitated dramatic ontological and epistemological transitions that shaped today's nursing paradigms.

The trajectory of finding truth (or several truths) persists and may continue to persist through time. The very nature of knowledge generation and research must not focus on discovering the truth, but with how the findings become the key to current problems and their acceptability in addressing issues. Conceivably, this is how the intricate system of truth really is. That the complexities of human existence in addition to elaborate factors of time, context, and each person's distinctive nature, bring multiple dimensions of paradigms. Every dimension exhibits a distinguishing color, and that together, they make up the colors of nursing paradigms – vibrant magnum opus that symbolize truth, meaning, reality, and existence.

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