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Healing as Appreciating Wholeness

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▼ Abstract

The "clinicalization" of human experience by the health care disciplines has been instrumental in denying important facets of human life and not fully accounting for the essence and wholeness of experience. A unitary conceptualization of healing as appreciating wholeness is proposed. Appreciating is actualized through a praxis approach used for research and practice-unitary pattern appreciation-created to bring the theoretical principles of unitary science into practical reality. It is essentially a praxis for exploration of the wholeness within human/environmental pattern. Healing is conceptualized as the realization, knowledge, and appreciation of the inherent wholeness in life that elucidates prospects of clarified understanding and opportunities for action. The essential features of the process of pattern appreciation are a synoptic stance toward pattern information, a participatory engagement with people in the exploration of wholeness, and the transformative nature of the process that illuminates the possibilities in wholeness. A case demonstrates the nature of the unitary pattern appreciation process and its healing qualities.

As nursing has moved to assume an expanded role in the clinical care of patients, nurses have participated in the creation of a "clinicalization" of human experience that has been instrumental in denying important facets of human experience. The clinicalization of human experience takes the form of an overemphasis on diagnostic representations that do not fully account for the essence and wholeness of the experience. This clinicalization is expressed in empirical, conceptual, and theoretical approaches that yield partial, and sometimes erroneous, accounts that miss the essential wholeness, unity, and uniqueness of human existence, similar to the androcentric bias in science noted by feminist scholars. ¹ This occurs in spite of our claimed holistic perspective that has embraced spiritual care and complementary healing modalities. Related manifestations of this phenomenon are an overemphasis on clinical specialization, client interventions shaped by economics rather than need, educating natural healing tendencies out of students, general subjugation of our spiritual consciousness to economics of health care, treatment protocols that do not

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consider wholeness of human existence, and overreliance on physical/material conceptions and models of human health and illness. A recent study ² comparing alternative healers and nurses described healers as creating a sacredness and reverence around their work in contrast with the clinical structures and techniques of nursing. An alternative to the clinicalization perspective is the focus of healing with its attendant concern for wholeness.

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A DIFFERENTIATED HEALING CONCEPTUALIZATION

It is acknowledged that there is a range of potential meanings given to healing that is extensive and diverse. ³ Kritek ³ points out that healing is a gerund derived from heal, which means whole. A gerund is a term originating from a verb but used as a noun. Consequently, the foundational meaning of the term is directly derived from the notion "to heal" or the activity of becoming whole. Therefore, healing is a process that becomes an object. Kritek's ³ comprehensive essay on the construct of healing and her reflections on the multiple meanings of the construct provide an opening and an invitation for articulating a unitary perspective of healing. She forcefully demonstrates the depth, richness, specificity, and focus that context brings to the meaning assigned to healing by persons and groups. She warns of "the anomalous situation where a sought-after wholeness is conceptualized and pursued in a manner that implicitly or explicitly denies or ignores dimensions of the human condition that are essential to achieving that wholeness." ³(pp11-12) Further, Kritek sheds light on the situation in which nurses are educated to attend to the subjective and objective meanings associated with wholeness and healing and to devise responses based on those meanings, yet "the ambitiousness of this intention is only superficially acknowledged, and the skills and the knowledge necessary to excel in such an effort are not yet delineated." ³(p14) A unitary conceptualization of healing as appreciating wholeness esponds to Kritek's concerns and cautions.

A unitary conceptualization of healing as appreciating wholeness differentiated from the synthesized view in the current literature provides an alternative to be considered as a framework for a healing science and practice. The synthesized view of healing as a nursing construct is elaborated by Kritek. ³ In spite of the variety of meanings, there is an overarching idea of wholeness inherent in healing stemming from what Kritek refers to as "some admixture of complementary conceptualizations," as seeking or reaching for a desired wholeness. There is an understanding that wholeness is an ideal rather than a reality, "since no human is actually whole." ³(p14) A goal or destination toward this ideal is implied. It also is understood that dissonant definitions of wholeness are differentiated, more or less, by their potential as confining and limiting in viewpoint and by the degree of complexity and robustness.

A unitary conceptualization of wholeness, ⁴ which is at the heart of healing, is clearly a departure from this synthesized view of healing. A unitary view posits that human beings are irreducible wholes and that the unitary nature of the environment also is irreducible. The concept of field is central to the unitary perspective and "provides a means of perceiving people and their respective environments as irreducible wholes." ⁴(p29) Although Rogers did not explicate a conceptualization of healing, it is clear that a unitary conceptualization of healing, grounded in wholeness, would require an understanding of human being/environmental wholeness as unitary. Practice and science through a unitary lens would accept the reality of wholeness not as an ideal, but as a given. Human beings and their environments would be approached as integral fields within fields that could not be extracted into parts, or more specifically, in theoretical terms as unitary energy fields. Newman puts it more succinctly and directly, "unbroken wholeness is what is real-not the fragments we devise with our way of describing things." ⁵(p37)

While I have a deep respect for the theoretical language of the science of unitary human beings, I have an even greater reverence for the experiential nature

of wholeness that supports this theoretical language. That is, my experience of being human engaged in practicing nursing with other human beings suggests a reality of wholeness. Newman aptly points out that we are embedded in what we want to study, and the nature of nursing requires that we engage in the experience of it to understand it fully. ⁵ My own view is that the nature of nursing is one of responding to the wholeness of human experience. I have used the practice and research enterprises simultaneously in an attempt to engage in nursing with a reverence for the wholeness humans bring to that engagement and to prepare myself for knowing and appreciating that wholeness. I have spent a considerable portion of my career developing this praxis that gives attention to the wholeness of humans and their environments and opens the possibilities for participatory, transformative change. ⁶⁻⁹ The approach has been refined to serve both the purposes of research and practice or can be used for either individually. I could not have sought this reverence for human wholeness or created an approach that attends to this wholeness without the conceptual system of unitary science. This is an example of what Wheeler and Chinn describe as praxis, "thoughtful reflection and action that occurs in synchrony." ^{10(p2)} So, it is for me theory and experience that create the synchronous context for reflection and action and provide the grounds for the perspective I have adopted of healing as appreciating wholeness.

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THE APPRECIATING CONTEXT

The appreciating context is based on the common understanding of the meaning of appreciation and the unitary perspective of pattern. In the dominant view of healing there is a seeking to understand desired wholeness through attention to the parts and the interrelationship of the parts to one another. In the practice of healing the focus is "on establishing, achieving, or regaining a sense of cohesion" among the parts. ^{3(p17)} In the unitary view of healing as appreciating wholeness the attention is on the pattern that emerges in human experiences, perceptions, and expressions occurring in unity and arising from human and environment mutual process. In the practice of healing the focus is on appreciating the wholeness within this pattern. Pattern, in unitary terms, is the distinguishing characteristic of a field and gives identity to the field. ⁴ Each unitary human field pattern is considered to be unique along with its own unique environmental field pattern. In human terms, the pattern gives identity to and distinguishes one person from another. It is the essence of being who you are; thus, pattern appreciation is reaching for this essence in each individual and seeing the wholeness within pattern. In summary, rather than knowing the parts to know wholeness, the unitary scientist-practitioner seeks knowing the pattern to know wholeness.

The elemental characteristics of appreciation were derived from reviewing the *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of appreciation: perception of the full force; sensitive to and sensible of delicate impression and distinction; perception, recognition, and intelligent notice; expression of one's estimate; sympathetic recognition of excellence; and gratefulness, enjoyment, and understanding. ¹¹ Appreciating means "perceiving, being aware of, sensitive to, and expressing the full force and delicate distinctions of something while sympathetically recognizing its excellence as experienced in gratefulness, enjoyment, and understanding." ^{7(p130)} The something in unitary healing science and practice terms is the wholeness inherent in field pattern as manifest in human experiences, perceptions, and expressions, or in simpler terms, the wholeness inherent in human life.

Unitary pattern appreciation reaches for the wholeness within pattern in the following six ways: ⁷

1. It seeks a perception of the full force of pattern.
2. It requires sensitivity to and sensibility of the manifestations that give identity to each person's unique pattern.

3. It involves perception, recognition, and intelligent notice of human expressions that reflect pattern.
4. It takes the form of an estimate of unitary energy field pattern as a meaningful representation of the pattern called a profile (often emerges as story, metaphor, and music).
5. It implies sympathetic recognition of excellence of energy field pattern meaning that pattern is significant regardless of characteristics.
6. It is approached with gratefulness, enjoyment, and understanding that reaching for the essence of pattern has potential for a deepening understanding in service to the individual and knowledge development for practice and science, and ultimately transformation of participants.

These characteristics or features provide the context for establishing an appreciating endeavor with clients or participants.

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THE APPRECIATING PROCESS

Unitary pattern appreciation was developed for the purpose of creating a unitary art and science that would bring theoretical principles into practical reality. ^{6,7} It consists of a process, orientation, and approach that can be used for research, practice, or combined research and practice intentions (praxis). Through its use over the past 2½ years with participants in a praxis enterprise, I became aware of the healing nature of appreciation turned toward wholeness. Three critical features of pattern appreciation create the conditions for healing: synoptic, participatory, and transformative.

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Synoptic

The synoptic orientation provides an alternative to the process of analysis for understanding information. Murphy ¹² employed an approach to his research on transformation known as synoptic empiricism. It was developed by Broad ¹³ and has been adapted for use in unitary pattern appreciation. According to Broad, "synopsis is the deliberate viewing together of aspects of human experience which for one reason or another, are generally kept apart by the plain man and even by the professional scientist or scholar. The object of synopsis is to try to find out how various aspects are interrelated." ^{13(p8)} In the practice of appreciation there is shift away from the attention on the interrelatedness of aspects and a focus on sensing an emerging pattern that reflects the wholeness of human life. Thus, aspects of human life, namely the experiences, perceptions, and expressions associated with living, are viewed together in an inclusive way to reveal the fullest picture of the inherent wholeness.

The scientist/practitioner may look for themes and commonalities in the pattern information or may use an assortment of ways of knowing that reveal a compelling sense of wholeness amidst the variety of phenomena of life. The synoptic process requires an inclusive view of what counts as pattern information. Pattern manifestations or phenomena that are labeled by participants as physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual are included as pattern information. They are understood contextually as arising from wholeness, not reflective of parts that do not exist in the unitary perspective. Observations by the scientist/practitioner of physical phenomena also are included as pattern information.

Ensemble is a useful concept to consider when thinking about the process of synopsis as a way of appreciating wholeness. Phenomena or features of human life are viewed as an ensemble that reflects pattern and wholeness. The definition of ensemble is "all the parts of anything taken together so that each part is considered only in relation to the whole." ¹¹ In the case of unitary pattern

appreciation, the term *facets* is substituted for *parts* since facet implies an aspect of something that is whole rather than something that is divisible into separate entities. The ensemble of phenomena of human life represents the facets of a pattern reflecting wholeness. As in the musical notion of ensemble, which means "the united performance of all voices or instruments in a piece of concerted music," 11 the scientist/practitioner of pattern appreciation listens for the united concert of voices in the phenomena conveying the essence of the pattern, and thus the wholeness, of human living. "The multiple, and sometimes seemingly disparate, manifestations of the field pattern form an ensemble of information that conveys a singularity of expression." 6 (p140) Developing one's ability to sense the pattern and wholeness is the goal of the synoptic process that supports healing.

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Participatory

Appreciative inquiry and practice are fundamentally participatory inquiry and practice. People seek to participate in the research or practice based on an invitation and/or knowledge of the work of the nurse. Although my work has been primarily in the community and participants come to engage in the appreciating process from knowing about my research/practice, it is possible that clients of health care institutions might have access to this type of engagement through expert nurses who have developed the requisite knowledge and skills. Regardless of setting, it is critical that there be mutual understanding between the nurse and the participant from the beginning as to the nature of the appreciating process, the egalitarian ideal inherent in the relationship, the openness to emergent discovery in the work, the potential for negotiation, and the fact that potential outcomes are not predicted or prescribed.

The participatory orientation capitalizes on one of the major tenets of the science of unitary human beings: the capacity of humans to knowingly participate in change and in patterning. 4 It is this capacity that provides the opportunity for mutual discovery of possible avenues of action. The actions chosen emerge from the knowledge of wholeness that comes from exploration of one's pattern. The exploration and discovery mode of the process is created through a partnership. In this partnership, the nurse provides a contextual process of appreciating pattern, which is open to modification depending on the desires of the participant. The participant is viewed as an expert on his or her own life and the source of his or her own power and knowledge. Each encounter in the appreciating process is primarily in the form of a dialogue with content focused on life experiences, perceptions, and expressions. However, the use of music, imagery, or movement also might serve the dialogue and the emergence of useful pattern information to understand the person's wholeness.

The appreciative inquiry aspect has been developed over time using knowledge of participatory modes of inquiry. 14 Recently I discovered a field of participatory inquiry in organizational life known as appreciative inquiry, 15 which has features similar to unitary pattern appreciation. In relation to the organizational context, "more than a method or technique, the appreciative mode of inquiry is a way of living with, and directly participating in, the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study." 15 (p131) Likewise, unitary pattern appreciation is a way of participating in the varieties of human life experiences that reflects the wholeness of human existence. It aims to use this participation as a way of bettering the lives of human beings and to grasp a deeper understanding for developing knowledge of human wholeness and healing.

The life process system practice model described by Schaefer 16 has served to inform the refinement and development of aspects of the unitary pattern appreciation practice approach. This model of practice advocates for practitioner receptivity to the client's life process, embraces honoring this process, and acclaims the inherent healing capacity of the client. Likewise, in unitary pattern appreciation praxis the scientist/practitioner is receptive to the person's life experiences, perceptions, and expressions and honors the uniqueness of each individual life. The healing capacity is acclaimed through respect for the client's

ability to participate knowingly in change. In the life process system model, as in unitary pattern appreciation, "diagnosis is not the foundation for practice; wisdom arising from participation with clients is the foundation. In its denial of the primacy of diagnosis, the model implies a rejection of a dualistic view of illness (ill and not-ill) and of judgment as a critical attribute for the potential of healing." 7 (pp139-140) The ideal of control is inconsistent with the notions of unitary science predicated on acausality and unpredictability. Thus participation becomes central to the appreciating process of healing.

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Transformative

The transformative potential of unitary pattern appreciation is the cornerstone of healing. By giving attention to the wholeness of human existence through appreciating pattern, phenomena are seen in a new context. For example, my praxis involves helping individuals who are experiencing despair. When the experiences of despair, the perceptions of despair, and the ways in which despair are expressed in one's life are placed in the context of the wholeness of one's life there are revelations that go beyond the tendency to treat and/or understand the despair as a symptom of a disease or a single condition. Returning to the organizational brand of appreciative inquiry, there is a similar perspective that relates to healing. In organizational appreciative inquiry "serious consideration and reflection on the ultimate mystery of being engender a reverence for life that draws the researcher to inquire beyond superficial appearances to ... the life generating essentials and potentials of social existence." 15 (p131) Likewise, in the case of unitary pattern appreciation, the inquirer/practitioner reaches for the essentials and potentials within the wholeness of human life. And like the organizational appreciative inquirer who is "drawn to affirm, and thereby illuminate, the factors and forces involved in organizing that serve to nourish the human spirit," the unitary nurse is drawn to affirm and illuminate the factors and forces that nourish awareness of the richness and potentialities in the wholeness of human life. 15 (p131) This creates a condition and context ripe with possibilities for transformation.

Unitary pattern appreciation also invites participants to consider the possibilities of seeing change within the consciousness of pandimensionality, which is a unitary view of time, space, and movement. However, this is a concept introduced in the context of the participant's life concerns and not imposed as the only way of viewing the realities of change. Thus, it is provided as one way of viewing change amidst many others. Ultimately, the participant's choice of viewing change is acknowledged and embraced as an aspect of the participatory and exploratory nature of unitary pattern appreciation. Pandimensional consciousness, a complex and abstract concept, is akin to Moss' spiritual concept of "unitive consciousness." 17 Unitive consciousness occurs when individuals become referent to infinity, meaning that they realize infinite potential and infinite time-space-movement-change. Moss 17 described unitive consciousness in ways similar to those Martha Rogers 4 used to conceptualize a pandimensional universe. Two descriptors best convey this pandimensional or unitive consciousness where we are "in a great sea of being infinite in all directions." 17 (p65) The first descriptor is "where feeling, sensation, and thinking are a unified continuum that is not limited by the boundaries of the body." 17 (p65) The second is "every moment is a new birth and what is being born is not merely the product of the past, not merely the cause of some earlier effect, but rather part of a ceaseless cosmos of revelation." 17 (p66) The transformation potential of pandimensional awareness is the same as that of unitive consciousness as Moss described it; that is "to become referent to infinity is to not have our identity located in any finite notion of ourselves. We are movement and flow. Our careers, our health, our families and possessions may temporarily represent a harbor of our sense of self, but ultimately we are always far more." 17 (p67)

Finally, the transformative potential for scientists/practitioners rests within the way in which they learn to use themselves as instruments for pattern appreciation. Because the quest for pattern knowledge requires attention to all

realms of data, one must develop data acquisition skills that allow the data to reveal themselves. This is very similar to the quest for data acquisition and verification in religious life described by Wilber. ¹⁸ A person must be developmentally adequate to a disclosure or the data will not reveal themselves. In meditative knowing injunctive tools of Zen are used for the disclosure. Injunctive tools also are emerging from the quest for understanding unitary pattern. The inquiry process associated with unitary pattern appreciation calls for a willingness to use injunctive devices that will open one to the revelation of unitary pattern data. Likewise, this inquiry process calls for the scientist/practitioner to use these data in ways that are responsive to the unique pattern of the individual in designing unitary nursing practice strategies. For most nurses, this would mean at least a relative transformation toward being a more sensitive instrument of awareness.

In summary, the healing potential of appreciating wholeness rests with these three foundational features of the process that are integrated within the context of an appreciating attitude. The nurse invites people to engage in a participatory exploration of the wholeness within life using a pattern lens that avoids the fragmentation of other ways of viewing experiences. By using a synoptic framework, all phenomena are considered relevant and are embraced as an ensemble of information that helps both the nurse and the participant see the wholeness within this pattern. Spiritual phenomena are considered along with physical, emotional, mental, cultural, and social phenomena in an inclusive way. In contrast to the interpretative paradigm that seeks "to understand and derive meaning from the human experience," ¹⁹(p71) unitary pattern appreciation seeks to represent the wholeness within human experience by attending to pattern. In the unitary way of thinking, healing is not seeking a desired wholeness but rather is realizing, knowing, and appreciating an inherent wholeness that illuminates potentials of understanding and possibilities of action.

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A CASE OF HEALING AS APPRECIATING WHOLENESS

The following is a sketch of a case from my ongoing praxis project that demonstrates healing as appreciating wholeness. Karen, an early participant in the unitary pattern appreciation project, came in response to a flyer distributed in the community. She was in her early 50s, had three grown children, had been married and divorced twice, and was working as a legal secretary. She came to see me because of "ongoing despair." She said that when she saw the flyer she identified closely with the word despair. "I just feel like I am in a lot of despair. I probably don't look it, but I am. I am broken spiritually ... it's not a psychological problem, but spiritually I need healing ... that's why I wanted to come-to heal that."

The process of pattern appreciation with Karen involved asking questions about the nature of her experiences, the perceptions she had of these experiences, and the ways in which despair was being expressed in her life. Some of the questions were contemplated in preparation, but most often they emerged from the content of the dialogue. The dialogue focused on past, present, and future, and it covered topics related to relationships, family, work, play, beliefs, spirituality, physical sensations, health, dreams, feelings, and aspirations, in addition to whatever topics Karen raised. During the dialogue, I attempted to position myself in a stance of openness to hear the wholeness within Karen's portrayal of life. My emphasis was not only on listening to the words but also on being sensitive to and sensible of the variety of information that came forth in dialogue-the ways in which words were stated, the expressions, the movements, and the posture as well as my own reactions. I did not take notes because I wanted to be fully present to the experience of the dialogue.

I have tried to capture the unitary pattern appreciation process by describing the experiential, perceptual, and expressive aspects of Karen's life phenomena and by explaining the ways in which the synoptic, participatory, and transformative features were integrated. It is important to clarify that experience, perception, and expression are sources of pattern information and are considered facets of

pattern, not parts. A person experiences, perceives, and expresses all-at-once or contiguously. "Experience is the raw encounter of living loaded with sensation."

7^(p133) Experience involves sensing and being aware as a source of knowledge. 11 "Perceiving is the apprehending of experience or the ability to reflect while experiencing." 9^(p202) Experiencing and perceiving cannot be disentangled from one another. Perception is conscious knowing in the midst of experience. To express is to manifest. 11 Expression is manifesting the experience and perception of living that is the unique pattern of the individual. Expressions of pattern are the avenues to knowing pattern and thus wholeness. In the dialogue and the resulting text, the facets of experience, perception, and expression come forward in a unified way. They are disentangled here only as a simpler way of portraying the facets. There is a risk of violating the sense of wholeness involved in creating this representation of Karen's life as only excerpts can be portrayed from transcripts.

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Experience

Karen recounted a childhood of instability and feelings of not being acknowledged. "I went to six schools by the time I was in the sixth grade. I mean there must have been a reason why we moved so much. I don't know what it was. It seemed like my father was under more and more stress and became more and more distant.... He was physically not available. His emotions weren't available. Then when my mother died, he remarried and became even more distant." After her mother died, her father never discussed the death.

Karen told of one incident in her childhood that for her symbolized the essence of being unacknowledged. She was in elementary school and was being chased and taunted by a little boy. She asked for help from the teacher but the teacher told her not to worry. One day the little boy pushed her down on the playground and she got a deep cut on her chin. When she went to the teacher, the teacher laughed and told her the little boy just liked her and that was his way of showing her. Karen's mother was called, and Karen was taken to the doctor. The doctor painted a big red Mercurochrome smile on her face, and her mother and the doctor laughed.

Karen married a man who was so involved with his career that he gave her very little attention. He criticized her appearance and what she chose to wear. He had to approve of her clothing purchases or he would not give her money to buy clothes. She married a second time and experienced a similar situation: "Both husbands ... I kept hearing how much they loved me and yet it is not my definition of love or they're not available." She recounted a situation where as a young married woman she had a cat that had only one kitten. When she was away with her husband, her mother-in-law gave the kitten away without asking her even though the kitten was still nursing. When she became upset about it, her husband defended his mother. She portrayed this event as symbolic of this theme of not being acknowledged or recognized.

Karen went on to describe a recent time in her life after the end of the second marriage. She was being sexually harassed by a supervisor in a company for which she was working. This harassment went on for about 6 months. "He was married to a daughter of one of the founders, and he had a great deal of money." She finally had the courage to report him to her employers, and she was given a new assignment. Later she left the company because of the discomfort she felt.

Karen had read many self-help books and tried many alternative modes of healing including workshops on energy, music, and color. She was making efforts at integrating exercise and diet changes in her lifestyle. She also was participating in a motherless daughter support group. None of these efforts had helped her in a deep way, but she expressed the feeling that the despair would have been worse if she had not done these things.

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Perceptions

In relation to the death of her mother, Karen felt that no one ever recognized the pain she experienced. She brought this topic up in relation to parenting her own adult children. "I lost my mother when I was 19, so I'm real confused with what my role is. This has been a real issue for me. I don't know how an adult child relates to his or her parents." She went on to describe how she experienced parenting, "I do perceive them as draining the life right out of me. I even say that to them. I do feel I don't get very much back. I wish someone would take care of me." Karen recounted the physical tiredness and physical constraints of her life experience.

Karen perceived her situation as spiritual in nature. Her biggest spiritual concern for the future was one of being punished for her involvement with the man who had sexually harassed her in the workplace. "Yes, even though I know there wasn't anything I could do. I understand how it happened and I didn't have any evil with him. Still, I think I participated-being weak or doing something so despicable." Shame was a dominant theme in her life and expressed itself in her feelings about herself and in her dreams. She described herself as invisible during the sexual harassment. "I left my body. I think of the experience just like children do. I felt very much like a child. Who could I tell? Nobody would listen to me. He had all the power. I felt just like a child. The one thing was that he knew me so well. We had known each other for a year before this started. I trusted him." She added, "I think the first person I told did shame me and that was like my worse fear."

During the second session with Karen, I asked her if she could identify any ongoing trend in her life. This was an attempt to reach for the essence of her life experience. She described feeling as if she were being punished and went on to clarify what she meant. "I guess there is a theme-people who should care about me, take care of me, or help me letting me down or abandoning me-falling short." Karen perceived her life as lonely and lacking any sense of belonging. In this regard she depicted this as searching for a home. She demonstrated it with the example of her mother's death and her sense of not belonging in her father and stepmother's home and then getting married and hoping to find safety and security with her husbands. "I think I was looking for that place where they have to take you when you come home. Home is where they have to let you come in when you come home. I don't have that." I asked her if it was like shelter and she said, "If I draw it it's like a cave with a fire." She described the lack of a sense of belonging as an ongoing theme in her life and gave multiple examples from relationships with family members, spouses, and friends.

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Expressions

There were multiple expressions of the underlying pattern and wholeness of Karen's life. These included her choices of words and phrases. It also included the tone of her voice; her posture; her reactions and responses to questions; the way she walked; her clothing; her affect; her likes and dislikes; her favorite activities, books, and movies; her behaviors; her personal belongings; and her home and work environments. Three examples of expressions were dreams, stories describing events, and drawings depicting her experiences and perceptions. She spoke about the relevance of her dreams in understanding her situation. "I do pay a lot of attention to my dreams. It's reflected in my dreams of futility, of working for how to accomplish something." Her dreams were filled with painful images of her futile efforts to clean herself or get out of entanglements or mires while surrounded by taunting and laughing groups of people. In one dream, Karen is in a bathtub that is in a room open to viewers. She is filthy and dirty but the more she tries to clean herself, the more muddy she becomes and the more everyone laughs at her.

In another dream she is at a dance and the room is very cold. Everyone at the dance is wearing warm clothes. She is trying to put on a sweater when somehow

her dress is pulled away. In another dream sequence she attempts to make a speech. While preparing her speech, the spiral of her notebook pops open and strikes her in the face. She went in front of the audience with a red, swollen cheek. "The man came in who was going to help me and I was so relieved. I kept trying to turn it over to him, but whatever I did it just wasn't good enough and I got really distressed about presenting myself to someone who was an expert and then not really following through-winging it. That's sort of how I'm looking at my life when I'm telling you that. I feel like I'm winging it and I should know better, but I don't. Yes, that's sort of how I feel about myself right now."

One of the stories she wrote expressed the experience and perceptions of the event in her childhood where she was harassed and pushed by the little boy. This is an excerpt:

Well, the little girl was very confused. She felt like she was falling down a deep dark hole, watching the tall teacher, laughing at her as she disappeared. Something was terribly wrong. She was really and truly afraid! She had asked for help but no one was listening. What she thought was frightening, apparently everyone else just thought was funny-very funny. What could she do? Her friends just disappeared and the only adult only laughed. So she convinced herself that she must be mistaken and decided she would just do her best to avoid the mean little boy.

The next day at recess, the little boy seemed to know the teacher wasn't going to do anything to help the little girl, and he ran up to her when she was standing near the merry-go-round and pushed her so that she fell and got a deep cut on her chin. Her worst fears had been realized. Her mother was called and came to take her to the doctor. The little girl thought that now she would be safe. She was with her mother and the doctor. Certainly now someone would do something about this awful situation.

But instead of comforting her and making plans to punish the mean little boy, the doctor started to laugh too and painted a big red circle on the little girl's face with Mercurochrome. Her mother started to laugh too, and the little girl felt herself falling down that hole again, watching people she loved and trusted laughing at her. Everything seemed topsy turvy and very, very scary. Who could she trust? Where was she really safe? What was the matter with her that she was terrified and everyone else seemed to be enjoying a good joke? Was she so worthless that her fear was laughable? Either they were wrong or she was. And this scared her the most.

Karen had drawn pictures as a child and teenager, but her father had told her to stop because there was no future in being an artist. She used drawings to express her life and supplement a journal that she kept as part of her recovery from the abuse of the sexual harassment experience. She shared her drawings with me. She described what the drawings meant as she displayed them. One image depicted a woman with a big hole in her chest and someone standing on her shoulders. Karen described the picture. "That was me. That was how I was feeling Sunday night. I feel like there is some protection, but I feel so empty. This is my heart. There is promise of good things, but I don't have any way of getting them. I am tired." One image showed her straining to pull herself out of a crack. Another image showed a figure on a hillside with a gleaming and glittering town in the distance. Karen said that this represented her being away from happiness and wanting to reach it but not being able to go that far. Still another image was a figure crouched in a cave with a fire. Karen explained that she was trying to stay warm in her dark spot of life.

Karen also had a drawing of a figure next to a door. She explained,

And this is pretty much despair. But then it gets better. And here I am and

here I come. I'm all shaped up and I'm ready for things to get better. I'm all patched up. I'm trying to find a way out because the door knob fell off. There is no way out. My only alternative is to bust down this door. I want to go, but it's not possible.

Karen described a series of drawings done when she was going through the problem with the sexual harassment: "[H]ere I am in the comforting arms. But then she walks away and leaves me. I will be dropped at any minute. Here I am in a hollow again. The tip of my iceberg."

In explaining the essence of the drawings, Karen made the following remarks: "Yes, I'd like to feel, what you said, I'd like to feel my life is moving. I guess I'm tired of life ... like that first drawing was about comforting arms dropping. The universe comes and gives me a hug and then forgets me. I feel forgotten. And I think I said before that we were talking about if Jesus came back and he would say, 'Hi, Richard. How are you? Who's that? Do I know you?'"

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Synopsis, participation, and transformation

The synopsis, which replaces data analysis in conventional research, occurred in the unitary pattern appreciation process by looking at all facets of the data as a unit. In the beginning of my project I used a form that contained columns for experience, perceptions, and expressions and began looking across these facets for themes. I soon realized that disentangling the information was not necessary and as I read the transcripts and used a synoptic perspective the wholeness and pattern became evident. Synopsis also occurred in the unfolding dialogue that explored Karen's experience along with her perceptions and the ways in which these were expressed in her life. It was very important to acknowledge and honor the spiritual aspects of Karen's life in the process. The story that was written synthesizing the information was the most distinctive source of synopsis in the process.

Participation with Karen happened through setting the stage for the process to be negotiable and responsive to her needs, desires, and concerns. I talked with Karen about creating a partnership for this exploratory journey. Although I asked questions, Karen also asked my opinion, and I often shared my own experiences. There was a higher degree of freedom to share experiences, mutuality, and negotiation than in counseling sessions I had conducted using an interpersonal framework. When I presented the story that I created as Karen's profile, I asked her to consider whether or not it was an accurate representation of her life and to reject it, accept it, or alter it on her own terms. Throughout the entire process, Karen was viewed as the person who had the final decision on our process.

The transformation was experienced during the dialogues, at points of reflection on the process and content, in the creation of the story profile, and when I presented the story to Karen. In most cases the dialogues led to deeper understanding of the nature of her experience in its fullest sense. She used a strategy that I suggested-to re-write the endings of dreams. She adapted this strategy to re-write the endings of actual events that had taken place in her life. These events were ones in which her pain or distress was not acknowledged and she was not supported. She reported that this activity created a greater sense of power that was useful to her in dealing with current life situations.

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Story, metaphor, and music

After 3 weeks of dialogue I started to create a profile of Karen's pattern. I looked at the information from the transcripts and recalled my own experiences with her during our sessions. During my review of the transcripts I discovered that the most powerful metaphor in the text was the image of being in a cave with a

fire, except Karen could not build a fire and often found trouble finding any shelter at all. I thought this image symbolized her life most clearly. The image of the cave and building fires became the source of inspiration for a story that I started writing as the pattern profile that would represent the wholeness of Karen's life. It took me approximately 3 weeks to develop the story. I also decided to include music as a way of conveying the themes within the story.

The story is a dream-like account of the life of a little girl as she grows up and becomes a woman. The girl starts out with a wonderful life with loving parents.

There was once a beautiful child ... a bright and loving child ... born into the world and belonging to the world ... a world of love and of light and wonder ... of stars and moons and playfulness ... a world of laughter and joy. The child, a girl, was sheltered and cared for by two loving and adoring parents ... parents of the universe with wisdom and compassion and with a deep understanding of children and what they needed to grow and blossom.

As the child grew older life became colder and harsher. Her parents became more preoccupied with life and preparing for changes in each season, but her mother had begun to teach the girl to build fires to keep herself warm. One day the child came home and her mother was gone and she never knew what happened. Her father did not want to talk about anything but his work, and he never had time to help the girl cultivate the building of fires. The father saw that she was growing up and thought she should be able to build her own fires.

Her father was working on one of his projects. He was always making things ... interesting things ... the girl wanted to know something about this, but she also sensed she could not interfere with her father's work. It was particularly cold that day and she decided to ask her father to build a fire. "Father," she said, "I am so cold. Would you build the fire?" The look in her father's eyes was more chilling than any cold air ... or icy temperature she had ever felt before. Her father scolded her for asking. "It is time you learned to take care of yourself. You are old enough. If one is cold one finds warmth of his or her own will and action."

Her life after that became a series of attempts to find warmth in caves, to build fires, or to find someone to help her build fires. But after many disappointments she came to realize that there would be no help.

She built her own fires and it was easier this way-even if she was alone. The woman occasionally thought of her mother building fires and she missed that. No one ever built her a fire. They promised, but it never happened. She was alone except for her children. They needed many fires built because life was very cold.

At this point in her life, the woman meets a man who promises to build her fires. He tells her about a new kind of warmth that can be generated by the two of them being together. In the end, she suffers from her trust of this man.

The man taught her that she did not need fires to keep warm ... he could give her warmth ... and it would be better than fires ... and she would not have to give anything in return. The woman wanted to learn about this new warmth ... she did ... and she paid a heavy price for this new warmth. The man taught her how they could use each other to stay warm ... how they could use the heat in their bodies ... he didn't tell her the price. The price was a dear one ... she must keep their warmth a secret ... and if she told anyone she would suffer. The woman would have said no when she learned the price, but she was afraid of not being warm. You see the man had also found a way to take her fires away from her ... and when she tried to build a fire there was no warmth.

This is where a song is introduced in the story. It conveys the sense of being trapped after being involved with the sexual harassment. The song is "Paralyzed" by Rosanne Cash. It conveys a sense of hopelessness that then leads to moving beyond the event. In fact, Karen had in her real life finally faced her abuser and brought charges against him. The words convey the story of a woman who is paralyzed by a relationship. It describes her running from the bedroom with her legs paralyzed. She attempts to carve out her future acknowledging that she is both a prophet and blind. She realizes that it is nobody's business and that no one is to blame. She believes that she will meet the man sometime in the future with a new identity. She knows she has lifted the veil and walked through the flames and she will move on. [20](#)

In the story, after this experience the woman learns that she has lost her power to build fires and finds herself at the mercy of her destiny. This experience is captured in a song by Nanci Griffith entitled "Southbound Train." This is the story of a woman who is riding a train headed south. She describes herself as staring at the sky and thinking about her childhood while she is holding back her tears. She says that a stranger is sleeping beside her and it feels to her as if she is his wife. It is probably her husband. She notices the towns and cities going by and thinks about them as passing like the pages in the story of her life. Most poignantly, she characterizes her heart as being on the baggage rack, very heavy, and she is yearning for someone to carry it for her. She longs to have someone pay attention to it and to handle it with care, noting that it has been damaged from being dropped and that it needs repair. [21](#)

As the woman pondered her situation she remembers the power she had as a child and the sense of belonging and she also becomes aware of angels. A song is introduced here, "Calling All Angels," sung by Jane Siberry. This song begins with some beautiful chanting of religious and spiritual incantations leading to the continuous chant of calling all angels. The singer describes her journey as full of tears and hurt and uncertainty. She yearns not to be left alone. She questions her life situation and why it exists. Yet at the same time she notes the beauty of the sunset and nature which brings love and intensity into life. The singer appears to have a revelation in understanding as she thinks about the beauty and realizes that even if she could crack the code that would explain her life, she would not give up the pain and suffering that goes with all the beauty. In other words, she knows that she needs to embrace all of life, including the harshness and the loveliness. The song ends with a chant about the features of life and the discovery of the reality of uncertainty. [22](#)

The last part of the story is about the girl awakening from the dream (the story) as a woman and realizing her own possibilities. This final part of the story was written to convey and portray the sense of hope and the woman's spiritual beliefs that are aspects of her life that keep her moving onward. In this sequence she discovers a connection to a light and radiance that are sources of warmth. The light also takes the form of the presence of two beings who are guides and sources of support.

They both spoke simultaneously and said, "Sweet, perfect one ... you are not alone ... you belong to the universe ... just like the stars and the plants and all the creatures. We are here to help you on your journey ... you can count on us. Never again will you need to search for fires in caves ... or build fires ... for we will help you learn to keep the fire in you alive and strong ... and you will always find warmth in this fire." And the woman knew ... she belonged ... and she would take her own journey and write her own story.

The ending served two purposes: to suggest the possibilities inherent in realizing the wholeness of life and to acknowledge Karen's own power.

Karen was tearful after I presented the story and music. Excerpts from the transcripts that day capture her response: "Wonderful! Thank you. I loved it! The

music was just great!" "I think you did a wonderful job! It's so wonderful. I hate for it to end. It's so great to be understood!" "This is such a gift." "This is so much better than being diagnosed." "I was thinking that while you were doing that. You make it so you validate my experience. That's something I've never had. It's always been wanting to change or what I did wrong. This felt a whole lot more about what went on instead of, 'Oh, Lord. I have to change that now,' or 'If I would only....'" A critical feature of the unitary pattern appreciation process, and also of healing through appreciating wholeness, is a willingness on the part of the scientist/practitioner to let go of expectations about change.

The story that was created represents a pattern profile specific to Karen. Karen was asked to review the story and determine if she thought it reflected her life experience and the underlying pattern of wholeness. One aspect of the participatory nature of pattern appreciation is to collaborate on the creation of the profile so that it represents the perspective of the participant. In some cases an individual has created his or her own profile. In one case it was a series of photographs with an essay about that person's philosophy. In other cases, individuals have altered aspects of the story profile to capture more accurately the wholeness of their life pattern. The profile becomes a referent point for considering one's life situation and possibilities for integration and/or change as well as a source for nursing knowledge arising from praxis.

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SUMMARY

It is difficult to convey the essence of the praxis of pattern appreciation and to portray the wholeness found in a human life pattern. The scientist/practitioner is not meant to capture this fully-this praxis is really about seeking to represent the wholeness within pattern as a healing project knowing that, at best, this is a representation of the wholeness and not the wholeness itself. It is my experience that as I reach with another for this representation of wholeness we are led to revelations that far exceed our current clinical diagnostic representations. The process itself-the actual engagements of participatory exploration-serve revelatory awareness as well as the products of the story, the metaphor, and the music.

Healing is the realization, knowledge, and appreciation of the inherent wholeness in life that elucidates prospects of clarified understanding and opportunities for action. The unitary scientist/practitioner seeks knowing the pattern to know wholeness. The appreciation context orients the practitioner/scientist to perceiving, being aware of, and being sensitive to the unique manifestations of wholeness available in human encounters. It challenges him or her to express the full force and delicate distinctions of unitary pattern and its wholeness in representing the human experience. It requires a sympathetic recognition of the excellence of wholeness as experienced in gratefulness, enjoyment, and understanding. The essential features of the process of pattern appreciation are a synoptic stance toward pattern information, a participatory engagement with people in exploration of wholeness, and a transformative process that illuminates the possibilities in wholeness-the embodiment of healing.

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Key words: healing; nursing practice; nursing science; nursing theory; Rogers' science of unitary human being; transformation; unitary theory

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