

Wholeness and Life Patterning

Unitary Foundations for a Healing Praxis

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Unitary appreciative nursing is a healing praxis that is grounded in an evolving theory of wholeness and life patterning. The theory regards people as having the potential for transforming their health through participating knowingly in change focused on appreciating their wholeness and life patterning. In unitary appreciative nursing, people generate their own knowledge through appreciation and participation in the wholeness of life patterning. This knowledge facilitates and advances their flourishing and well-being in a healing praxis. The conceptual presuppositions and theoretical propositions that were generated or affirmed arising from a healing praxis are clarified and explicated with women who have experienced abuse and despair. **Key words:** *despair, healing, nursing theory, praxis, survivors of childhood abuse, theory-based practice, unitary science, women*

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF¹ a renowned psychotherapist in the field of addictions, came to the realization of the critical importance of recognizing and exploring the assumptions inherent in her training and the worldview from which her education arose. “I saw how important it is to ‘name’ our experience and our reality. As I did this, I began to question what I see as violence done in the name of science and healing in the helping professions. I began to ask if psychologists and people in the helping professions are open to asking themselves the question, ‘Is the unspoken worldview that underlies the assumptions from which I practice my profession perhaps, unwittingly, contributing to the very problems that I am committed to solve?’ If we are not open to struggling with this question and articulating our assumptions, we are, indeed, part of the problem.”^{1(p10)}

Schaeff¹ provides a view of practice from the vantage point of the practitioner from the

inside that is personal and compelling in nature. Her observations are meant to provide a launching pad from which to address critical concerns about the relationship of theory and practice. She described the struggle that she had reconciling the techniques and interpretations that she was using with what she really believed.¹ The evolution of her psychotherapy work is depicted as a process of uncovering philosophical and theoretical positions supporting what she was organically discovering in her practice. This discovery arose from what her life and work demanded. Theories emerged out of “painful and exhilarating shifts” that occurred in maintaining “integrity with myself.”^{1(p10)} She realized the need to move beyond psychotherapy and beyond science as she knew it.

The focus of this article is to provide an overview of a theory of wholeness and patterning that has emerged interactively from a program of research and practice. It is, perhaps, evolving into a midrange theory of unitary nursing praxis. It seeks to go further than the question that Schaeff¹ raises concerning the relationship between the unspoken assumptions and the worldview that she was practicing and the resolution of

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problems that she was hoping to solve in her professional work. "Rather, it seeks to explicate and clarify—to speak loudly—the assumptions and worldview from which I practice and delineate how these relate to healing as a praxis for nursing." It draws attention to the correspondence of theory and the experiential world of praxis.

Unitary appreciative nursing is an outgrowth of almost 2 decades of research and practice focused on the development of approaches that acknowledge and support the wholeness of human beings and their potential to participate in their own healing by becoming aware of their life patterning and using this knowledge to promote health and well-being.²⁻¹⁸ Unitary appreciative nursing clearly exemplifies the way in which conceptual and theoretical perspectives can guide the development of praxis in nursing. Although the publication of previous work has given attention to unitary appreciative inquiry (UAI) as an approach to praxis,^{3-5,11,14} this article explicates an evolving theory of wholeness and life patterning that guides a unitary healing praxis. The premise of this theory is that people have the potential to transform their health when they are invested in the process of appreciating their inherent wholeness and life patterning through participating knowingly in change.

This article posits that nursing is a healing praxis—the tendency toward healing is a capacity within all people and that nursing's core responsibility is to assist people to develop and use this capacity to their fullest advantage. People face life and health challenges that bring them in contact with nurses at all levels of practice. There are a variety of forms of practice within nursing that are guided by conceptual presuppositions and theoretical propositions. It is suggested that the goal of nursing is not to heal people, but rather to mobilize the capacity within people to heal. Often, this healing involves the use of relationships and the environment in creative ways to facilitate transformative change.

This issue of *Advances in Nursing Science* calls for manuscripts that address the value of

theory in practice and the value of practice for developing nursing knowledge. This article is structured to draw attention to the emergence of theoretical propositions through a program of inquiry as praxis, the explication of those theoretical propositions, and the correspondence of those propositions to the experiential world of praxis. This article is a product of an intentional program, spanning over 20 years, of conceptualizing and theorizing through the lens of the science of unitary human beings.¹⁹⁻²¹ The meaning and implications for nursing education, practice, and research are considerable.

EMERGENCE OF A THEORY OF HUMAN WHOLENESS AND PATTERNING

Several authors have made the point that one of nursing's foremost concerns is the wholeness of the person or wholeness of the person and environment. Swanson and Wojnar²² argue that nursing's goal is "healing the whole person."^{22(p8-43)} Cody²³ claims that nursing has a discipline-wide focus and central concern on the wholeness of human beings and a mandate to address this wholeness through caring. Supporting the conceptualization of a paradigm of unbroken wholeness by Newman,^{24,25} Rew²⁶ asks why nursing's role expansion has embraced the biomedical model instead of using advanced practice to address wholeness. Yet, there is little attention to the development of theories of wholeness that might inform the scope and aims of nursing at any level. The broadest and most detailed nursing theory that embraces wholeness and pattern is the health as expanding consciousness framework developed by Newman.²⁷ It has been used as both a theoretical reference point in an extensive number of practice and research projects both nationally and internationally.

More than 20 years ago, Smith²⁸ made the case that nursing's perspective of wholeness was influenced by the chosen conceptual lens. Conceptualizations of human wholeness

vary widely resulting in variation and lack of clarity in theoretical thinking about wholeness. Some have proposed practice models that focus on the nurturing of wholeness of the person noting that wholeness exists in the moment.²⁹ A phenomenological study of caring for victims of 2 massive hurricanes revealed a dominant theme of appreciating wholeness.³⁰ Likewise, in a review of 99 studies of caring, Purnell³¹ found appreciating wholeness to be a recurrent theme. Appreciation and realization of wholeness were also identified within principles of listening to music as a nursing intervention.³² A theory of death as transformation implies a dynamic person-environment wholeness associated with expanding consciousness.³³ References are frequently made to the role of supporting, nurturing, or acknowledging wholeness.^{29,30,34} Alternatively, many authors subscribe to healing or health-promoting practices that are characterized by journeying toward, achieving, striving for, or emerging into wholeness, implying that wholeness is an ideal rather than an inherent characteristic of being human.³⁵⁻⁴⁰ Wendler's concept analysis of healing suggests that a key attribute is a sense of wholeness that can never be fully known.⁴⁰

The most specific theoretical perspective that integrates wholeness is proposed by Abalos³⁵ for people who work with disabilities in the Latino community. His theory of transformation gives primacy to the power of stories to create meaning in working within cultures. He argues that the most important story of our lives is the journey of transformation. We encounter life with 4 faces (personal, political, historical, and sacred) and participate giving meaning through story. The 4 faces of our being provide evidence of whether we are relating to people with disabilities in creative or destructive ways. It is in the service of transformation that these 4 faces are fully present. "This experience of wholeness allows us to participate together with people with disabilities in order to create new and more loving alternatives in the delivery of services."^{35(p30)}

The development of the theory of human wholeness and life patterning arose from a program of inquiry that started with attention to methodological necessities for exploring human experience based on assumptions, principles, concepts, and theoretical propositions grounded in the science of unitary human beings.¹⁹ The early development of the UAI method occurred in relation to wanting to understand depression from a unitary conceptual perspective. Through clinical observations and experiences as an advanced practice nurse in mental health and the evaluation of research on depression, the focus of inquiry became *despair*.¹²⁻¹⁴ Despair was chosen as the focus of inquiry because it seemed to capture the nature of the human experience of depression going beyond depression as a clinical phenomenon and diagnostic category. Later, this program of inquiry expanded to encompass the lives of women abused as children.¹⁶

The 3 initial studies using UAI culminated in the development of a healing model for women experiencing despair.^{9,12-14} The first project involved 6 women experiencing despair through prolonged practice engagement as the method of inquiry.^{9,12} This project was designed using a case method approach to research despair, while simultaneously interceding to reduce despair among the women. The researcher invited participants to explore despair within the context of their individual lives focused on revealing an underlying patterning that could account for their experiences—to achieve a unitary understanding of despair. Women's experiences, perceptions, and expressions were synthesized into major themes and distinctive features that exhibited patterning. The patterning was discovered within their stories through a process termed *synopsis*: Cowling defines *synopsis* as "the deliberate viewing together of aspects of human experience which for one reason or another, are generally kept apart by the plain man or even by the professional scientist or scholar."^{9(p8)} The researcher constructed a patterning profile for each

woman; these profiles were woven into individualized narratives containing metaphors and imagery pertaining to women's patterns of experience and despair. Patterns were explored from which to synthesize more encompassing and unifying patterning. Specific sections of each narrative were accompanied by carefully selected songs—providing a richer and more distinctive account of the experience portrayed. Women were presented with these narratives and accompanying music in an effort to ensure that their voices remained clear among the metaphors and lyrics. Women were viewed as coparticipants—the researcher sought validation from the women of the accuracy and fullness of the representations of their life patterning.

The women reported that the process and results of this UAI allowed them to broaden and contextualize their interpretation of despair; this permitted them to better see and understand the sources of their own despair. The patterning profiles served as sources of information that helped the women uncover positive options in response to difficult experiences, as opposed to dwelling on despair.¹⁴ Through this project, women became more aware, knowledgeable, and liberated and gained a sense of power through cooperation with the researcher in synthesizing the wholeness and patterning of their lives.¹² The UAI process “provided despairing women opportunities to participate in shaping inquiries that address their issues and concerns, help make connections between theory and action, and provide avenues for experiencing personal and collective power.”^{11(p213)}

The second project, which directly expanded upon the findings of the first, involved 14 women experiencing despair; 10 of the women reported some form of abuse in their history—physical, sexual, or verbal.^{9,12,14} After conducting interviews, the researcher created 4 documents from the qualitative data: the original transcript of the interview; a synopsis of the interview synthesized by the researcher; a patterning profile for each woman containing metaphor, music, and im-

ages corresponding to the major themes that emerged; and a summary containing a general account of each woman's life as being dominated by despair. Each woman was provided with the 4 documents relating to their interview for validation. Participant feedback was requested in relation to how accurately the documents depicted each woman's life patterning from their viewpoint.

The patterning profiles helped the women reach a new understanding of how their despair fits within the greater context of their lives. Commonalities among the women's life paterings were a lack of hope and sense of futility, a sense of powerlessness, feelings of isolation, a sense of fragmentation, a sense of narrowing or elimination of options, an inability to fully express inner experiences, and a sense of pervasiveness and constancy of despair.^{9,12,14} Although there were several similarities among the women's patterns of despair, these commonalities clearly could not account for the individual uniqueness of each life infused with despair. Each woman had distinctive experiences, perceptions, and expressions within her life.

The third project involved 6 women who reported a history of childhood abuse—an important factor in their despair during adulthood.¹⁴ The women met with the researcher in a unitary appreciative cooperative inquiry group setting for ten 3-hour sessions. The main topic of discussion during these meetings was the relation between despair and abuse. The researcher focused on women's patterns of experiences with despair to create a unitary understanding of a broader life patterning experienced by women with histories of abuse. The inquiry also sought to appreciate how women have taken control and might further take control over their lives to make positive changes. In doing so, the meetings included both general and specific discussions on how childhood abuse, and associated despair, affected women's life patterning.

In line with the previous 2 projects, group-meeting transcripts were synthesized into a single, participant-generated, appreciative

patterning profile. Within a group context, UAI allowed the women to gain insight into their own abuse and despair through co-operating with women who shared similar experiences.¹⁴ The women used music, narratives, poetry, and movies to symbolize their individual and collective life patternings—allowing them to most effectively communicate their feelings of weakness, vulnerability, and anger. Through group interaction, the collective appreciative patterning profile, and reflections on personal life patternings of despair, the women learned useful knowledge and tools to lessen their despair and consequences of abuse.

The findings of these 3 studies, taken together, highlight the power of UAI to elucidate the patterning of women's lives associated with despair and abuse. This power is reflected in a conceptual understanding and model that highlights UAI as a tool for generating theory regarding unitary healing;¹⁴ *healing* is described as the "realization, knowledge, and appreciation of the inherent wholeness in life that elucidates prospects of clarified understanding and opportunities for action."^{9(p32)}

Although Cowling conducted this initial research and theorizing on the basis of his UAI program, other nurse scientists have integrated this method into their research designs with great success. Their findings attest to the robustness of UAI's application, in both theory and praxis, to research domains outside of the seminal work by Cowling. Specifically, Rushing⁴¹ used a UAI framework to investigate the relation between life patterning and serenity among 9 participants in a 12-step recovery program for persons with substance addiction. Individual interviews and data synthesis were used to develop a patterning profile for each participant that was then presented to the participant for validation. With input from participants, the researcher crafted poems—some of which took the form of narratives, acronyms, or lyrical chants.

Rushing⁴¹ identified 4 major patterns along the recovery process: addiction, turning points, early sobriety, and finding serenity.

These 4 major patterns helped to identify 7 commonalities among participants that may reflect a larger life patterning: (1) The negative consequences related to addiction were similar across participants, (2) identification as a member of a 12-step program, (3) the realization that the 12-step program was crucial to their successful recovery, (4) 8 of the 9 participants relapsed at least once and all participants were mindful of the dangers of relapse, (5) a spiritual experience was essential to recovery, (6) frequent attendance at 12-step activities was an important factor in maintaining sobriety, and (7) all participants reported a sense of serenity during the recovery process.⁴¹

Unitary appreciative inquiry has also been used to study the participatory dreaming process.^{42,43} Eleven women, who had experienced childhood abuse, participated in a "facilitated walking dream process"^{18(p67)} to better appreciate the healing process throughout their lives. Synoptic and analytic methods were used to develop a group healing profile that was transformed into a series of music videos by the researcher and validated by the women. The findings of this study suggest that "healing from abuse is a lifelong process described as a journey taking them more deeply into themselves and potentiating their process of self-discovery and empowerment."^{18(p67)}

Kemp⁴⁴ used UAI to elucidate the life patterning of women who had been deployed during the first Persian Gulf War. Through interviews and data synopsis, Kemp⁴⁴ teamed with the women to develop narratives with metaphors alluding to women's deployment experiences. The life patterning of women returning from deployment involved sexual trauma experienced while in the military, social limitations, and a loss of trust for specific people and institutions. The hopes and dreams expressed by the women were woven into potential patterning profiles for the future; this, ostensibly, provided women with a road map for achieving their positive goals even within the context of the hardships that they endured while enlisted and overseas.

EXPLICATION OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Unitary healing is conceived of as the process of appreciating wholeness and life patterning through participating knowingly in change that supports emancipatory transformation.¹⁸ Unitary healing as praxis is the core of unitary appreciative nursing. In this conceptualization, healing is unitary, appreciative, and participatory in its process. Knowledge arising from this process sustains change that is both emancipatory and transformative. Unitary healing is both self-generated and other-facilitated, meaning that unitary healing is a natural process that can be enhanced through self-development and collaborative endeavors with others. Unitary healing is a nursing theory grounded in the science of unitary human beings as explicated by Martha E. Rogers¹⁹⁻²¹ over the last 25 years of her life. It reflects affirmed philosophical and theoretical positions from unitary science and newly generated conceptual presuppositions and theoretical propositions grounded in the praxis experiences themselves.

Unitary healing is based on the following set of conceptual presuppositions and theoretical propositions:

1. All persons, families, communities, and cultures are inherently whole.
2. Wholeness expresses itself in human life patterning experienced, perceived, and expressed in diverse ways.
3. The appreciation of human life patterning creates the context for understanding one's self, others, and groups within which one lives.
4. Knowledge gained through appreciating life patterning extends beyond symptoms, disease, and diagnosis and a problem-oriented approach.
5. Appreciation requires participation with others that acknowledges and affirms the validity of individual experiences.
6. Appreciating wholeness implies an inclusive stance on the variety of human experiences that are considered relevant to healing.
7. Appreciating life patterning through participation generates diverse forms of knowledge that are useful in developing healing potentials.
8. The purpose of unitary healing is to create the conditions for the fullest expression of human emancipation.
9. Emancipation is characterized by transformative change that nourishes and inspires the human spirit.

Rogers¹⁹ described the *human being* as "an irreducible, indivisible, pandimensional energy field identified by pattern and manifesting characteristics that are specific to the whole and which cannot be predicted from knowledge of the parts."^{19(p29)} This conceptualization of the human being was explicated in the context of a broad conceptual system that explained human experience and development as unitary phenomena. This definition of human being implies that to have knowledge of the whole, one must use pattern as the reference point. The first conceptual presuppositions of the theory of wholeness and life patterning form the foundation and basis for the remaining theoretical propositions and derive from this definition, the human being.

Inherent wholeness

The wholeness of persons, families, communities, and cultures is inherent. Consistent with the conception of humans as unitary energy fields,¹⁹ humans exist in wholeness. Likewise, groups of humans (groups, families, communities, and cultures) exist in wholeness. This view of wholeness as a feature of human nature is congruent with a variety of other theoretical perspectives described in scientific literature.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁸ However, the majority of healing conceptualizations have been summarized and presented as a seeking for or reaching for a desired wholeness.⁴⁹ A healing conceptualization from a unitary standpoint

requires an acceptance of human wholeness. Thus, it has been suggested previously that healing from a unitary perspective is coming to the realization of an appreciation of wholeness.⁹

Viewing the person as whole requires approaches that go beyond the current tendency to fragment the human experience that is often associated with clinical conceptualizations in health care where the focus is on disease and symptoms. The conceptualization of the human as inherently whole means that approaches that are used—considered physical/physiological, mental/emotional, spiritual/metaphysical, and social/cultural in nature—are not actually influencing a part or a system but are always addressing human wholeness. Theories that account for human wholeness, thus, are important to understanding health care. It is critical that we consider these human experiences in the context of human wholeness—as manifestations or expressions of wholeness. Without doing so, we neglect the potential value and limitation of the approaches.

Human life patterning

In the unitary science framework, humans are conceptualized as fields of energy with pattern as the distinguishing feature of that field. Alligood and Fawcett⁵⁰ suggested that patterning was a more consistent term as the identifier of the field characteristic than pattern because on the basis of their analysis of unitary writings, this was a much more dynamic term consistent with the overarching worldview. Since unitary fields are viewed as in constant change, the term *patterning* conveys this sense of continual movement or flow. Logically then, patterning conveys a process of unfolding that cannot be easily captured. Rogers¹⁹ suggested that the human field had manifestations of its pattern that included observable and nonobservable phenomena. From the unitary healing perspective, manifestations of field patterning include phenomena that are characterized as physical/physiological, men-

tal/emotional, spiritual/metaphysical, and social/cultural; these must be contextualized within wholeness, however, rather than reduction.

Human field patterning unfolds as life—one's life is characterized by unique patterning. Thus, the creation of the concept of life patterning implies that the human field energy pattern expresses itself in a life patterning, which is the distinguishing characteristic of that person's life. Life patterning is realized within the experiences, perceptions, and expressions of each person's life. Although people may share common experiences, just as with the field pattern being the distinguishing feature of the field, the life patterning of each person is the distinguishing feature of that life. Patterning accounts for the uniqueness of each life, whereas the manifestations of patterning may account for the commonalities of lives; we are both universal and unique beings. Our universality is also a function of the shared life patterning that reflects our connectedness with one another and the environment—a manifestation of what Rogers¹⁹ referred to as the mutual human-environmental process.

Patterning appreciation

The major referent point for unitary appreciative nursing is human life patterning. In other words, the attention of nursing—the science and art of unitary appreciative nursing—is human life patterning. There is a pursuit through inquiry to know life patterning for the development of knowledge for the science of unitary appreciative nursing. In the practice of unitary appreciative nursing, there is reaching to understand life patterning. Inquiry and practice merge together to form unitary appreciative nursing praxis. Questing for knowledge and understanding of life patterning occur and take form in the process of appreciation.

Unitary patterning appreciation evolved from a desire to give attention to patterning that went beyond assessment or appraisal. Appreciation was selected based on an analysis

of the conceptual meaning of appreciation. The defining features of unitary patterning appreciation are the following:⁹

1. Seeks a perception and understanding of the full force of life patterning.
2. Requires sensitivity and sensibility of the manifestations identifying the uniqueness of life patterning.
3. Involves perception, recognition, and notice of the variety of ways in which life patterning is conveyed.
4. Allows for portraying the fullness and richness of the wholeness of life patterning.
5. Implies a sympathetic recognition of the distinctiveness of the life patterning regardless of its characteristics.
6. Necessitates an attitude or orientation of positive reception and understanding that illuminates potentials for transformative change.

As a healing enterprise, the focus is upon receiving, recognizing, and appreciating the wholeness that is expressed by life patterning.

Appreciative knowledge

Appreciation creates a form of knowledge that has characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of knowledge. For instance, appreciative knowledge describes and explains the uniqueness of life patterning. Information generated from an appreciative stance creates knowledge that is contextualized to the individual or group that is the focus of practice or inquiry. "Appreciative knowing assumes a stance of mystery than can never be fully known."^{18(pp70-71)} Unlike critical knowing that seeks to address a problem or answer a question, unitary appreciative knowing requires being caught up in or exploring the mystery or miracle that exists within human life patterning.

The development of UAI emerged from a unitary focus and was informed by appreciative inquiry developed in the field of organizational theory.⁵¹ Appreciative inquiry has been described as "the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organiza-

tions, and the world around them."^{51(p3)} Appreciative inquiry has further been characterized by "the discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system."^{51(p3)} Unitary appreciative knowledge arises from a participatory search between nurses and those whom they serve, and it focuses on the discovery of what gives life to human life patterning. It requires the development of a cooperative relationship in which the person seeking help is an expert on his or her own life. It seizes upon moments and opportunities for a mutual discovery of the factors and forces involved in life patterning. It seeks to illuminate the wholeness of life to accentuate what is potentially transforming and liberating.

Validity of individual experience

Unitary appreciative nursing regards individual experiences and perceptions as valid when accumulating information about life patterning. Individual experiences and perceptions are recognized and affirmed as being central in understanding and appreciating life patterning. It is dependent on the acceptance of the uniqueness of individual human experience and the acceptance of the validity of individual perceptions. In unitary appreciative nursing, the voice and perspectives of the individuals involved in the care experience are crucial to the development of knowledge that supports the actions chosen for practice.

The creation of an egalitarian relationship is required between nurses and people seeking help to acknowledge and affirm the validity of individual experiences. This means intentionally creating a relationship in which the other's voice can be heard fully. This means honoring the voice of the other as a credible source of information. This means giving priority to the voice of the other in considering the value of information being gathered to understand and appreciate life patterning. This is an appreciative relationship where a high degree of worth is placed upon creating the time and the space for the fullest participation in the exploration of life patterning. This inherently involves suspending

judgments, assessments, and diagnostic representations of what is shared to allow for the deepest and broadest appreciation of life patterning.

Inclusivity of human experience

There is also a high degree of value and worth placed on the varieties of human experiences involved in life patterning. In unitary appreciative nursing, the ongoing focus is upon knowing the wholeness of life patterning and using this knowledge creatively to facilitate desired change. The lens for knowing wholeness is opened widely to encompass the fullest spectrum of human experiences. As stated previously, experiences categorized as physical/physiological, emotional/mental, spiritual/metaphysical, and social/cultural are considered in the context of being expressions of wholeness and patterning. The varieties of human experiences are explored simultaneously to become aware of similarities and dissimilarities that might provide information about an underlying patterning. In unitary patterning appreciation, there is an ongoing process whereby the information gathered or generated is examined to find a sense of coherency that represents wholeness—this is called synopsis. This means relationships and interconnectivity of data or information emerges creating new awareness and knowledge of the patterning and wholeness.

In avoiding the tendency to exclude certain forms of information, the participants in this process open to the possibility of understanding more broadly and deeply what is happening in life patterning. By taking an inclusive stance of what counts as information, doors are open to consider what role various experiences play in the larger scheme of life patterning. For instance, there is often a tendency to avoid considering experiences thought of as spiritual or extraordinary as valid. Yet, these types of experiences coupled with other experiences provide information that is critical to knowing wholeness and explicating the life patterning of an individual. An inclusive stance toward information from human ex-

perience also helps overcome the tendency to dichotomize and categorize information as subjective and objective and place differing values on these sources. Ultimately, the value of information is considered in terms of the degree to which it sheds light on the life patterning of the individual and the potentials for healing.

Diverse forms of knowing

One of the central theoretical propositions of the science of unitary human beings is that humans have the capacity to knowingly participate in change.¹⁹ Barrett and colleagues⁵² developed a specific theory of power derived from unitary science called the power to participate knowingly in change theory. Unitary appreciative nursing places an emphasis on participating knowingly in change through life patterning. Diverse forms of knowledge emerge from appreciation and participation leading to opportunities for mutually discovering avenues for action.¹⁰ Sense making occurs in the participatory processes of engagement, shared reflection, cooperation, and dialogue. This is experiential knowledge. In the process of mutual discovery, imagery generation and creative expression lead to presentational knowledge. Theorizing or the making of propositions about what is happening occurs through participation leading to propositional knowledge. Competencies and skills are developed as a culmination of the process and take the form of practical knowledge.¹¹ These 4 forms of knowledge—experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical—are described by participatory and cooperative inquiry scholars.⁵³ In unitary appreciative nursing, the central focus of these forms of knowledge resides in life patterning, and the use of this knowledge supports healing. Healing is appreciating wholeness that leads to transformative and emancipatory changes in the lives of the individuals involved.⁹

The process of participation, particularly knowing participation in change, is healing for individuals. The participatory context offers the time and space for people to

share their life experiences, discover life patterning, and consider and experiment with strategies to improve their lives. Participatory engagement involves clarifications and elaborations of information, formulation of impressions, and reflections on what is being learned through sharing and mutuality.¹² An emphasis is placed on what is happening from the client's perspective, and the nurse contributes through sharing observations and perceptions on the basis of general knowledge of similar situations and unique knowledge related to the particular situation. There is active sharing between the nurse and the client, and the nurse seeks to ascertain whether the knowledge of wholeness and life patterning represents what is going on from the perspective of the client.¹⁷

Healing as emancipation

Unitary appreciative nursing is aimed at creating the conditions for people to experience the fullest expression of their freedom. Healing is characterized by a sensation of emancipation associated with limitations involved in health and life challenges. A sense of freedom arises from the participatory process of discovering and appreciating the life patterning that underlies the client's concerns. "As the person and the nurse participate in uncovering this patterning, they become aware of the possibilities for change and transformation that free the person from perceived limitations."^{17(p92)} The varieties of understandings that come about in unitary appreciative nursing suggest ways so that people might free their lives from constraints to health and well-being. "A primary ideal of unitary nursing is to enhance the fullest expression of human freedom in the lives of those who seek their services."^{17(p93)} The processes of appreciation and participation guide nurses to create conditions to support this ideal.

The unitary appreciative nursing perspective on emancipation does not imply that there are not substantive constraints exter-

nally imposed on individuals. One of the primary goals of unitary appreciative nursing is to assist people in developing ways to moderate or alleviate these constraints. Appreciative and participatory processes and strategies extend beyond individuals to groups and communities. Change and transformation can be targeted at facilitating social action. Within unitary appreciative nursing, "people can not only discover the connection between their personal power and these constraints but also uncover the subtle ways in which many of these constraints are used and allowed to limit personal freedom and health."^{17(p94)}

Nourishing and inspiring the human spirit

Emancipation involves transformative shifts in consciousness that suggest new ways of moving forward with life and health challenges. Emancipatory transformation comes forward out of the processes of appreciation and participation used in unitary appreciative nursing. Emancipation expresses itself in creative and innovative thinking that suggest possibilities for fulfilling dreams and desires. Sources of change and transformation are envisioned through an understanding of the fullness and richness of life patterning. "Through using an appreciative stance toward the wholeness of life, encouraging knowing participation in change, and using awareness and action aimed at emancipation, change and transformation are shaped by the individuals who seek the assistance of nursing."^{17(p95)}

Emancipation is a form of change and transformation that is characterized by nourishing and inspiring the human spirit. This means that the person is able to envision the possibilities of growth and flourishing amid life and health challenges. The actualization of change is realized through deeper and richer understandings of the wholeness of life and the potentialities of life patterning. The challenges faced are used as opportunities to inspire creative approaches to life and health.

These challenges can be seen as opportunities because they are viewed in the context of wholeness and life patterning. For example, diseases and diagnoses are viewed differently when considered within this broader context extending perceptions, understandings, and appreciations beyond the biomedical worldview. The testament of effective unitary appreciative nursing rests with its ability to help the person see and realize new potentials within life patterning to achieve desired goals and aims for life and health.

CORRESPONDENCE OF THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS AND WORLD OF PRACTICE

The correspondence of philosophical and theoretical positioning with the experiential world of practice is at the heart and soul of nursing praxis.^{54,55} Praxis has been conceptualized in different ways. The conceptualization of praxis here places an emphasis on discovering the connections between what is philosophical and theoretical and the experiential world of practice. I believe that this is the process Schaefer¹ is referring to when she speaks of the evolution of her work arising from an uncovering of philosophical and theoretical positions concurrently with what was being discovered in her practice. At the center of a unitary praxis, such as the healing one being described here, is the recurring conceptual ideal of knowing participation in change. Knowing participation in change in praxis is the simultaneous consideration of the philosophical and theoretical with the practical. "In what ways do my positions inform what I am experiencing as I practice? And, in what ways does what is happening as I experience practice inform my positions?" The philosophical and theoretical aspects of knowing merge with the experience of practice work correspondingly. Schaefer¹ describes this as organic in nature—being organic, it is very difficult to describe explicitly. The praxis notion of knowing participation in change is described via the examples of working with women

who had experienced child abuse and women who experienced despair.

Inherent wholeness is revealed

As women came forward to describe their despair, they always told stories that connected their despair to the totality of their lives.^{12-14,16} Likewise, when women came to share their experiences of abuse as children, they described a connection to the rest to their lives. In both cases, given the time and space to do so, women conveyed more encompassing expressions of despair and abuse in their lives. These women described a continual flow of unfolding in their lives in which despair and abuse was connecting the past, present, and future. Despair and being abused were intimately tied to their experiences, perceptions, and expressions of themselves and others in ways that went far beyond these phenomena themselves. Wholeness revealed itself most distinctly in the pervasiveness of the phenomena as realized throughout the various aspects of their lives. Despair and abuse were experienced with a sense of wholeness transcending emotionality, physicality, or spirituality. This was the revelation of wholeness.

Life patterning is discovered

The women shared their experiences of despair and being abused as children within the larger context of their lives. As they explored their experiences, they shared perceptions of their lives, while describing how their lives were expressions of despair and the abuses. Women began to see interrelationships among elements or aspects of their lives that took the form of patterns. Within these patterns, they saw a larger patterning of life that merged past experiences, current states of being, and anticipated futures. The patterning could be sensed as a larger story with many themes woven together to suggest wholeness. Oftentimes, participants came to realizations of the connectedness of elements that seemed desperate when looked at only

superficially. This was the discovery of life patterning.

Appreciation creates a context for understanding

The women were engaged in a process of appreciation guided by the nurse. Nonjudgmental reflection was encouraged with the aim of describing and understanding the fullness and richness of their lives. The nurse sought to inspire by example using the patterning appreciation orientation described previously. This orientation involved promoting the placement of despair and abuse into larger contexts. The prevailing guiding question was always some form of "What is happening here?" hoping to broaden the contextualization of experience, phenomena, and events. This created a sense of "relative presence" meaning that the women experienced the reality of their lives as within the present moment integrating time, space, and movement. The appreciating patterning process was approached as a way of understanding a mystery, getting caught up in the miraculous, and seeing beyond symptoms. This was the creation of a new context for understanding despair and abuse.

Appreciative knowing emerges

The women came to understand their experiences and the associated phenomena as clues to a larger patterning that distinguished their lives. For instance, despair was not an isolated symptom that needed to be treated. Despair was a dominant feature of these women's lives and infused their thinking and reactions to events in their lives. Sources and manifestations of despair became more evident within this larger context. Despair was apprehended and comprehended more deeply and broadly. Despair was appreciated as a feature of life patterning. The referent point for elucidating despair shifted to life patterning. Likewise, these features played out in the patterning appreciation for women who had experienced childhood abuse. This was the emergence of appreciative knowing.

Participation is requisite to knowing life patterning

The appreciative knowing emerged in conjunction with a belief in the superiority of knowing through participation and the use of participatory processes. Women were understood to be the authorities regarding the nature of their experiences, and the uniqueness of their voices and perspectives was highly valued. Processes employed for patterning appreciation were dialogical in nature incorporating shared reflection on what was being revealed both individually and in groups. The women participating in these projects were asked whether the methods and approaches being employed were best suited to capturing their voices and perspectives and the richest and fullest picture of their lives. The validity of knowledge claims was based on the extent to which the information being generated reflected the concerns and issues of the women involved. The credibility of knowledge rested upon the ideal that both the uniqueness and the universality of human life could be fully appreciated by the participants. Participation was crucial in exposing an inclusive picture of the factors and forces contributing to life patterning. Validity and credibility of information were viewed as highly dependent on the degree of intentional participation in generating knowledge. This was a demonstration of participation as a requisite for appreciative knowing.

Appreciation of wholeness is inclusive

The despair and child abuse projects relied upon a very open lens of what counted as information that could support an understanding of life patterning. This lens encompassed the multiple facets of life patterning associated with despair and child abuse. Women in these projects conveyed information about the various dimensions of their lives associated with having been abused as children. Many different examples, some individual and some collective, were depicted. Phenomena were explored concurrently viewing these as manifestations of wholeness and reflective of

life patterning. Physical/physiological, mental/emotional, spiritual/metaphysical, and cultural/social phenomena were viewed together to disclose patterning and wholeness within the lives of the women. These informational sources were explored together with the women to search for the patterning, which connected them. No source of information was given precedence over other sources of information. Being inclusive about the phenomena and accepting them as evidentiary material of wholeness created the opportunity for expanded realizations about their lives. Thus, inclusivity facilitated the appreciation of wholeness.

Diverse forms of knowing support healing

The intermingling processes of appreciation of life patterning and participation in discovering wholeness create the conditions for expanded forms of knowing. Some examples of these forms of knowing have been described by cooperative inquiry scholars.⁵³ The women in the despair and childhood abuse projects experienced these forms of knowing. Experiential knowing expressed itself with a sense of mutual resonance through participatory engagement. The sensation of being understood more fully and the belief that others “really got my point of view” were features of experiential knowing. The women demonstrated what Heron and Reason have described as “transformations of personal being and empathic relating.”^{53(p370)} Presentational knowing was manifested as an expression of experiential knowing in aesthetic form. Heron and Reason⁵³ portray this knowing as an articulation of experiential knowing. In the work related to despair and survival of child abuse, women wrote stories and poetry, created imagery, chose music, and photographed objects that represented the nature of their life patterning. Propositional knowing has been depicted as an intellectual enterprise whereby propositional statements are generated about the world.⁵³ From the projects with women with

despair and women who had experienced childhood abuse, propositions about life patterning were developed. As a component of propositional knowing, the women examined and commented on these propositions evaluating their relevance in relation to their lives and other women’s lives that had similar circumstances. Finally, practical knowing, which in cooperative inquiry is given primacy, results in the development of competencies and skills, in particularly how to do transformative actions. New competencies and skills were developed by the women in the projects described. These ranged from personal ones such as learning to manage stress and relieve anxiety to taking social action such as the formation of support groups. All of these diverse forms of knowing played a role in creating conditions for healing.

Unitary healing emerges as emancipation

The women involved in the unitary appreciative nursing projects used the life patterning knowledge as a primary point of reference for understanding themselves and identifying potentialities for change. Health and life challenges that were encountered by these women were seen within the context of the fullness and richness of their lives. Within this enlarged context, each woman saw limitations and potentials for change with new perspectives—limitations appeared less imposing and potentials seemed more possible and more expansive. Women reported feeling freer and more liberated with a sense of power to more fully express and enhance their lives.¹³ There was a greater degree of confidence experienced in each woman’s knowledge, facility, and capability to surmount or moderate the consequences of despair and abuse. A sense of freedom was realized in acts confronting personal and interpersonal issues related to despair and abuse and in courageously seeking social justice. This was unitary healing emerging as emancipation.

Emancipation nourishes and inspires the human spirit

Women in the described projects experienced transformation in the form of illuminating despair and abuse in the larger context of their lives. Connections that drew attention to larger issues and factors giving them an ability to free themselves from limitations and develop strategies that enhanced well-being were revealed. Examining the roots of despair led one woman to appreciate "the sanity of her despair."^{13(p103)} By appreciating the wholeness of their life patterning, many women reported identification of inherent strengths they possessed that they had not noticed previously. These strengths could then be mobilized to overcome or mediate barriers to responding to life and health challenges. Dialogue, journaling, and artistic expressions increased sensations of power and possibilities. These processes and new behaviors nourished emancipation and inspired human spirit within the women.

SUMMARY

In unitary appreciative nursing in which healing is the praxis, people generate their own knowledge through appreciation and participation in the wholeness of life patterning. This knowledge is a source of information that can be used to facilitate and advance their flourishing and well-being. The unspoken assumptions of unitary appreciative nursing have been explicated to clarify that theoretical propositions are at the heart of a praxis

focused on healing. Likewise, organic discoveries of the experiential world of a unitary healing praxis illuminate theory.

The implications of unitary appreciative nursing for research, education, and practice are immense and worthy of further elaboration. Needless to say, a shift in nursing toward a concentrated focus on the wholeness and patterning of humans and their worlds would mean significant change. Attention has been drawn in the discipline, and beyond, to researching wholeness, educating the whole person, and practicing emphasizing wholeness of people. The unitary healing theory at the core of unitary appreciative nursing provides for a beginning elucidation of specific principles and strategies for advancing an agenda marked by a substantive concentration on wholeness as an individual, organizational, or disciplinary imperative.

As has been pointed out by others in affirming the study of Bortoft,⁵⁶ the grasping of wholeness in nature can be shocking.⁵⁷ We come to understand "the part as a place for presencing of the whole."^{56(p284)} We have "awareness that is stolen from us when we accept the machine worldview of whole assembled from replaceable parts."^{57(p7)}

With unitary appreciative nursing, we are often shocked by the grasping of wholeness in human life. We come to understand and appreciate that disease, symptoms, and specializations are a place for presenting of the whole. This is an awareness that has been stolen from us by the dominance of the biomedical worldview.

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