Professional Role Identity Formation Theory

Implications for Professional Role Clarity & Nurse Work Engagement in the Current Public Health Crisis
Always Important & Even More Relevant Today

- Despite heroic attempts, the Pandemic
  - Impacted ability of nurses to provide care to patients in ways they have done previously - a practice dis-satisfier
  - Generated ambivalence about their role as a nurse
  - Disrupted the nurse-patient relationship
  - Produced moral distress when not enough time to make personal connections with patients when they saw suffering that they could not prevent
- Each influenced whether nurses stay engaged or withdraw from caring work.
Work Engagement Defined - Getting On the Same Page

- A positive, fulfilling state of mind about work that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption

- Attributes
  - Self sufficiency, autonomy, control of practice, effective communication

- Antecedents -
  - To Trust - organizationally, managerially and collegially
  - Feel Empowered and Self Confident

  Schaufeli, Bakker, Salanova (2006)
Professional Role Clarity & Nurse Work Engagement Connection

- Conceptual Alignment/Overlap
  1. Autonomy
  2. Control of Practice
  3. Self Efficiency
  4. Empowerment
  5. Justice - equitable treatment
  6. Integrity - trust
  7. Dignity encompasses autonomy empowerment

- Why study Professional Role Clarity and Work Engagement?
  - Critical issue linked to performance, patient experience, and healthy work environment
Value of Theory, Research and Practical Application

Help:
- Explain the link between professional role identity formation and professional *nursing* role identity formation

- Explain the link between passion for one’s professional role as it applies to the work of nursing and the development and sustainability of an engaged professional nursing workforce

- Generate and test solutions based on a view work engagement as a multifaceted concept that includes antecedents derived from values, professional expectations, and aspirations

*Professional Role Identity Formation Theory is one approach!*
Two Dominant Theories: Identity Theory (IT) & Social Identity Theory (SIT)

- Both theories have much in common
  - The difference is a matter of emphasis rather than difference in kind
  - Both focus on the social basis of self concept and nature of normative behavior

- Stetts & Burke (2002) argue that a Theory of “Self” must include both role “Who one is” (IT) and group “What one does” (SIT) as basis of identity formation

- **Symbolic Interaction A Perfect Fit!**
  - Well developed Theory of Concept of Self
  - Focus on interactions between “Self” and “Others” that can explain social order and change
Symbolic Interaction Framework: “Self-Other”

Historical Perspective

- 1931 - WI Thomas developed the notion of “definition of the situation”

- 1934 - George Herbert Mead built on the concept
  - Viewed “Development” as a social process between self and society through language and significant symbols
  - Individuals assign meanings to things in order to decide how to act/behavior
  - People change based on their interactions with objects events ideas other people

- 1969 - Blumer
  - Social institutions are “social habits” occurring within specific situation common to those involved in the situation such as “The Professions”
**Structural Symbolic Interaction Framework**

- 2008 - Sheldon Stryker (Indiana School)
  - Expanded Mead’s Concept of “role taking” to demonstrate structural aspect of the interaction
  - Broadened role clarity to include Who one is! and What one does!

- My interest - What influences behavior and behavior change?
  - What key “Self-Other” messages and interactions influence role identity formation & role taking in general and specifically, related to professional role identity formation

- Key question?
  - In what way did early awareness, interactions and experiences influence thoughts/ideas about the professional role applied to nursing and the meaning of work?
Graphics Help!
Interactionist Perspective of Human Behavior /Activity

Cognitive-Physiological  Psychological  Social

Influences/Shapes

Dimensions of the Experience in interaction with others

Perceptual Definition of the Situation
Subjective meaning attached to the situation

Influences

Effect on the Situation

Congruency-Self  Congruency-Others

Guides

Aspects of Human Behavior

Cognitive-Physiological  Psychological  Social
Theoretical Alignment: Structural Symbolic Interaction & Transition Theory

Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 2010)

- “any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles”

- Transition is ONLY a transition if the individual experiencing it considers it a transition
Perceptual “Definition of the Situation”
Subjective meaning attached to the situation

Dimensions of the Experience in interaction with others

Influences/Shapes

Effect on the Situation

Influences

Guides

Aspects of Human Behavior

Cognitive-Physiological

Psychological

Social

Transition Opportunity

Self

Other

Congruency-Self

Congruency-Others

Transition Opportunity

Transition Opportunity

Transition Opportunity

Transition Opportunity
O’Rourke Role Identity Formation Theory:

MESSAGES MATTER!

Formative Years - On Becoming a Professional
Self - Other Interactions
Perceptual "Definition of the Situation": SELF

Internal Messages “SELF”

Self/Personal Values & Expectations
I want to be:
• Independent & responsible
• Decision maker
• Leader
• Able to work with others
• Skilled & competent
• Able to help others
• Socially responsive
• Influential with power to make a difference
• Involved in science
• Educated
• Control my work & have authority
• Engaged in meaningful work

Internal subjective meaning attached to the situation
Perceptual “Definition of the Situation” - OTHER

External “OTHER” Messages about the Professions

Other/Values & Expectations

Professional Role Obligations
Characteristics/Expected role behavior

Tenets of Profession
- Service orientation - Public Interest
- Self-regulation Privilege
  - Autonomy - Decision maker - Leader - Accountability
- Theory & Evidence driven practice
- Ethics driven practice
- Transfer Knowledge - theoretical and practical

Societal and Legal

External subjective meaning attached to the situation
Looking for Congruency - Self Other Values

“Others” Perception of Nursing Professional Role & Obligations
- Family/Friend Nurses
- ANA Social Policy Statement & standard Code of Ethics
- ICN Definition
- Scope of Practice
- Nursing Theorists

“Self” Alignment of Personal Values & experiences in general
Self/Personal Values & expectations related to health and illness and nursing

External subjective meaning attached to the situation

Transition Stage
Professional Role Clarity, Role Adoption and Engagement In Nursing

Personal & Professional Role Identity *Congruent* with Behavioral Enactment/Comportment & *Internalized*

**Internal Messages “SELF”**

- “Self” Alignment of personal values & experiences
- Self/Personal Values & expectations related to health and illness and nursing

**External “OTHER” Messages about Both**

- “Others” Perception of Professional Role & Obligations
- “Others” Perception of Nursing Professional Role & Obligations

**Looking for “Self - Other” Congruency**

- External subjective meaning attached to the situation

**Transition Stage**
Solutions:

• Promote a clear, concise and consistent message about the Professional Role as a foundation for Professional Nursing

• Developed a graphic to communicate the concept easily and still capture its essence

• Created a Model to keep the MESSAGE Clear
Connecting Professional Role Clarity & Nurse Work Engagement: A Value Driven Proposition

- Individuals bring messages to the workplace

- How clear one is about their professional nursing role impacts the workplace

- Incongruence gives rise to role confusion and disengagement

- Better understanding of the link between professional role clarity and nurse work engagement is essential to the development and sustainability of a healthy work environment that benefits providers and patient
O’Rourke, M. (2021) A Situation-Specific Theory About Professional Role Identity Formation as Related to Role Clarity & Nurse Work Engagement
Key Messages

❖ Professional role clarity is a significant and foundational concept related to:
  ❖ Professional role identity formation
  ❖ Interprofessional practice
  ❖ Nurse work engagement
  ❖ Patient experience
  ❖ Patient and organizational outcomes
  ❖ Curriculum development
  ❖ Conceptual frameworks for Research
  ❖ Healthy work environments

❖ Important issue whether a clinician, educator, researcher, manager, executive or consultant
Thank You

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