2.2: The Nursing Metaparadigm

The central themes and unifying concepts that form the basis of nursing in their broadest sense constitute the nursing metaparadigm. Traditionally speaking the four concepts inherent in the nursing metaparadigm are person, environment, health, and nursing [1]. The metaparadigm forms the backbone, figuratively speaking, of what it is that we as nurses do. These metaparadigm concepts are tied together by the laws that govern the highest function of the health of a human being, how the human being interfaces with the environment, and the process by which positive or negative changes in health ensue [1].

A person is defined as the one receiving the nursing care. Environment is viewed as the area or space wherein the person exists. Health is seen as the point where the patient is along the health-illness continuum. Nursing is the action taken by the nurse [2]. A nursing theorist defines each of these metaparadigm concepts in accordance with their worldview of nursing. Thus a metaparadigm can be thought of as an overarching principle or umbrella covering our outlook that defines our practice.

As a nurse, it is important to take an inventory of ourselves by examining how we were brought up, what we assume to be true, what beliefs we hold dear, and what our values entail. This will assist us in defining our worldview that guides and influences our practice. This can be done by examining our cultural beliefs, how we were raised as a child, parental relationships, era in which we were part of, social views, as well as any other influences that have had a major impact on our lives. Assumptions, beliefs, and values guide our practice. It is through the process of self-inventory and self-realization that one can identify their own unique worldview. It is equally important for a nurse to be able to understand the worldviews of the patients whom we serve. This enables us to convey understanding and compassion in our interactions, which ultimately promotes health and healing.

The study of how nurse scientists define metaparadigm concepts defines our profession.

As related to paradigms, Kuhn states, “By studying the and by practicing with them, the members of their corresponding
community learn their trade” ([3], p. 43).

To illustrate, holism is a concept that is used in the nursing arena to define the metaparadigm concept of person. Embodiment is a unique state that refers to how patients experience themselves. Nursing is beginning to see that the understanding of patient embodiment is central to providing patient care. The author proposes that nursing is evolving to include the understanding of both the patient and the nurse embodiment as central to care for a patient. It is proposed that nurses face a challenge of reflecting on their own embodiment and whether their persona interferes with the practice of providing holistic care [4]. This implies the importance of self-knowledge as well as cultural sensitivity as a basis for holistic care.