

2018

Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses Using the Lens of Legacy

Verliss L. Keller-Miller
Augsburg University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd>



Part of the [Nursing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Keller-Miller, Verliss L., "Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses Using the Lens of Legacy" (2018). *Theses and Graduate Projects*. 845.
<https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd/845>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Idun. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Graduate Projects by an authorized administrator of Idun. For more information, please contact bloomber@augsbu.edu.

Running head: EXPLORING THE LIVES OF RETIRED NURSES

EXPLORING THE LIVES OF RETIRED NURSES USING THE LENS OF LEGACY

VERLISS L. KELLER- MILLER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Nursing Practice

AUGSBURG UNIVERSITY
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

2018

[signature page]

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| FIGURES | v |
| PRESENTATIONS..... | vi |
| DEDICATION | vii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | viii |
| ABSTRACT..... | ix |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Background | 2 |
| Purpose of the Project | 3 |
| Significance of the Project | 4 |
| Nursing Theory | 5 |
| Summary | 6 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE SUPPORT | 7 |
| Self/Story..... | 7 |
| Role | 9 |
| Legacy | 11 |
| Summary | 12 |
| CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING THE LIVES OF RETIRED NURSES | 14 |
| Description of the Project..... | 14 |
| Initial Contacts | 14 |
| Format of Individual Conversations | 15 |
| Project Implementation..... | 15 |
| Nursing Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model..... | 16 |
| Theory Concepts | 16 |
| How Theory Supports the Project..... | 17 |
| Conceptual Model..... | 19 |
| Implications for Advanced Nursing Practice | 20 |
| Summary | 20 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION..... | 21 |
| Evaluation Process | 21 |
| Critical Reflection | 22 |
| Summary | 22 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS | 24 |
| To Consider..... | 24 |
| Future Areas of Study | 25 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Implications and Impact | 26 |
| Summary | 26 |
| REFERENCES | 27 |
| APPENDICES | 29 |
| Appendix A: The Generations..... | 29 |
| Appendix B: Legacy Typology | 30 |

Figures

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| FIGURES | 19 |
| Figure 1: Conceptual Model..... | 19 |

Presentations

Poster presentation

Sigma Theta Tau International

Kappa Mu, Winona State University

Rochester Community and Technical College, Heintz Center

Thursday, April 19, 2018

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to five beautiful retired nurses who agreed to spend time with me in conversation. Your time to share and tell me about yourself and the many roles you held during your professional years made this paper possible. We certainly all agree that “once a nurse, always a nurse.” Each legacy you shared represents your dedication to the nursing profession and the facets of your professional life, too many to ever count.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the DNP/ TCN faculty of Augsburg University's Department of Nursing for providing guidance through 3 years of advanced learning in a creative and adventurous format. The transcultural opportunities provided insight into new worlds and will be remembered forever. Thank you, Katherine Baumgartner, for supporting my idea to see how other retired nurses view their legacies. You started me down this important path. Congratulations and well wishes now in your retired years. And thank you Cheryl Leuning, for continuing me on the path to finish an important project, to begin to view the legacies of the lives of the most trusted professionals in the country. Thank you, Kristin McHale, for reviewing my paper, and finally thank you to Kathy Ferguson, Bethel Church Parish Nurse, for also reviewing my paper and providing emotional support through this important project. To all retired nurses and those to be retired soon remember, "once a nurse, always a nurse." And finally, success in this transcultural nursing program could not have been possible without the ever-present support of my peers who walked across the stage with me at graduation. Thank you so very much.

Abstract

Legacy can be viewed as a summary of life. Legacy develops over a lifetime and changes and grows as one ages. How do retired nurses view their legacy? This paper looks at a select group of five female retired nurses and how each views her legacy at this time in life. Each was a professional nurse, and each is fully retired. Imogene King's Goal Attainment Theory discusses the concepts of self and role. Through individual conversations, each retired nurse shares her life story of self and the roles she held during her working years. Literature yields little information about this cohort of post-professionals. This project provides a deeper understanding of how retired nurses view their individual legacies and thus presents a new source of information that is meaningful for the discipline. Retirement is a time to reflect on the facets of their individual lives from the perspective of an elder and to look from the past to the present to summarize their lives. The concepts of self and role describe how nurses live and work; how they are successful and attain goals they set for themselves, and how they view the many facets of their lives. How one perceives self and one's role in life, when combined, ultimately becomes one's legacy.

Key words: legacy, nurse, retired, role, self

Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses Using the Lens of Legacy

Chapter One: Introduction

Nursing, a complex vocation, has provided women and men with long professional careers. After retirement, what is the perspective of a retired professional nurse as she or he leaves the formal work of nursing? The complexities of the working years are now in the past, and the focus of life is shifting toward a less predictable future. What will those shifts look like for nurses when they change from long professional careers and transition into a non-working phase of life? Are there aspects of retirement that are unique to retired professional nurses? How does a retired nurse review and share the legacy of nursing experience that he or she has accumulated? Leider and Shapiro (2004) discussed retirement as the “second half of life” (p. vii) and used the metaphor of gathering around a fire to illustrate the transition into retirement. Another useful metaphor for retirement is a crystal, made up of facets that shine. The many-sided facets of each crystal provide representations of the qualities, dimensions, and characteristics unique to each nurse throughout her or his life. For this DNP project, a group of five retired nurses from Bethel Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minnesota, explored the meaning of retirement after long and successful careers in nursing. Looking through their personal lens, each retired nurse shared her view of legacy at this time in her life in a personal conversation with me, the author. It was a process of discovery for each retired nurse. In this way, the facets of each nurse’s life were explored, and the lens of legacy was used to reexamine and illuminate what a small group of retired nurses viewed as their most memorable contributions to nursing and how each defined her legacy as a retired nurse.

Background

The context for this practice project is the discipline of nursing. Within the discipline, the role of the professional nurse encompasses a wide range of responsibilities from complex direct patient care to the administration of health care programs and facilities. At all levels, nurses have been guided by professional values, policies, and institutional rules and regulations. For example, the American Nurses Association (n.d.) standards have guided nursing practice for over a century, defining nursing as:

... the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations. (p. 1)

In addition to the ANA definition of nursing, the nurse theorist, Imogene King (1981) defined “a process of human interactions between nurse and client whereby each perceives the other and the situation; and through communication, they set goals, explore means, and agree on means to achieve goals” (p. 144). Newman, Sime, and Corcoran-Perry (1991) state that the focus of the discipline of nursing is “caring in the human health experience” (p.3). Jean Watson (2016) defined nursing as “a human science of persons and human health-illness experiences that are mediated by professional, personal, scientific, esthetic and ethical human interactions” (p. 1). These nurse theorists have grounded their perspectives of the nursing profession through their theories and have thus provided a strong foundation upon which to build nursing knowledge and practice.

Although the ANA definition of nursing identifies the complexities of the nursing profession, the nurse theorists tend to focus more clearly on the humanity of the

discipline. Legacy is a summary of how a person experiences the whole of nursing throughout her/his life and the roles she/he has assumed as a professional.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this DNP project was to learn directly from a select group of professional retired nurses how they define legacy in their personal and professional lives. How have they transitioned from a busy professional life to retirement? How do they articulate legacy in this transition, and what do they view as their contributions to the legacy of the profession? Stated another way, what do the retired nurses' lives look like through the lens of legacy from their own perspective?

Legacy can be viewed as a summary of life. It is received from one's family at birth and develops over a lifetime. People are born with a genetic legacy from the family members whose principles and behaviors they also inherit and hand down from one generation to another. Each person then lives and develops a personal meaning to life, drawing not only on the inherited past but also on all experiences throughout life. As such, one's legacy develops over the lifetime and changes and grows as one ages. The total of life is what determines a personal legacy. Hunter (2008a) noted much of legacy includes wills, artifacts, autobiographies, and health behaviors. Hunter (2008b) also noted that legacy often focused on financial aspects, and personal items. Hunter and Rowles (2005) noted a typology of legacy that included three elements: values, personal items, and biological inheritance.

In preparation for this DNP project, a professional nursing literature search was conducted related to retired nurses and their legacies. Utilizing versions of the search terms *retired* and *nurse*, little information from nursing journals identified in the

Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (EBSCO, 2018) was found. A general literature search of the term legacy found some useful information from other journals, but few added depth to the unique topic of nurses' legacies.

The legacy that 20th-century nurses have received from their predecessors is indeed lengthy and substantial. An article, "25 Famous Nurses – Past to Present" (2016) noted five nurses in particular who stand out: Florence Nightingale (1820-1920), who is credited with establishing nursing as a profession; Clara Barton (1821-1912), who served during the American Civil War and is credited with establishing the American Red Cross; Dorothea Dix (1802-1887), who fought in the courts for the rights of the mentally ill and improvement of hospitals for the mentally ill; Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), who lobbied for the right of women to have effective birth control; and Virginia Henderson (1897-1996), whose training was from the Army School of Nursing, and also Teachers College, Columbia University. She received both a bachelor of science and master of arts degrees. These are very strong shoulders to stand on; they have provided a strong foundation.

Significance of the Project

This project provided a deep understanding of how retired nurses view their individual legacies and thus presents a new source of information that is meaningful for the discipline. Retired nurses are a specific culture of post-professionals who have influenced the lives of many people through administering their health care knowledge, skills, and abilities during their entire careers. As retired nurses, they are viewed as persons who held positions of respect in society, and information they shared is helpful in making connections between the working years and the retired years. Retirement is a time to reflect on the facets of their individual lives from their perspective of being an older

adult and to look from the past to the present to summarize their lives. Participants in this project are all retired nurses who are members of Bethel Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minnesota. Bethel is a congregation of over 4,000 members, and a significant number of them are retired nurses. Time allocated to individual conversations with each participant allowed them time to review their life, the roles they occupied, and to reflect on their individual legacies.

Nursing Theoretical Foundation

This DNP project is grounded in Imogene King's (1981) Theory of Goal Attainment. Goal Attainment Theory claims, "A major thesis of the framework is that each human being perceives the world as a total person in making transactions with individuals, and in the environment" (p. 141). King's theory was chosen as elements of goal attainment support the process of life as it leads to the retirement years and beyond. The theory describes human beings as open systems constantly interacting with their environment. It is through dynamic interpersonal relationships that persons grow and develop as they reach for certain life goals. Persons grow and develop personally, interpersonally, and socially. They set goals and selected ways to achieve those goals.

Goal attainment refers to the life experiences that nurses perceive as accomplishments throughout the span of their lives and into retirement. As such, the two concepts in King's (1981) theory that most strongly support the project are self and role. The concept of self is included in King's description of the Personal System. Self describes the nurse as an individual and reflects a personal story. The concept of role is included in the Interpersonal System. Role includes all roles of the past and present that relate to family, friends, community, and the nursing career. Legacy relates to the Social

System which is based on history, experiences, and influences. These three systems, personal, interpersonal, and social are the framework upon which King's (1981) Goal Attainment Theory is based.

Summary

Nurses are valued members of their communities, and each has a valued legacy to share. This project created space and opportunities for retired nurses to engage in a conversation to determine legacy as viewed through an individual lens. The project is supported by concepts of King's Goal Attainment Theory which includes self and role that ultimately result in legacy. Chapter Two provides information retrieved from a literature review that supports the notion of legacy as it relates to the retired professional nurse. Concepts of self and roles as identified by theorist Imogene King (1981) will be explored in greater detail. Legacy will be evaluated as a concept that each nurse can define as she views self and roles through her individual lens.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Scholarly literature reveals little information about how nurses view their legacies after retirement. Nurse theorist Imogene King (1981) uplifts the concepts of self and role in her Theory of Goal Attainment. Both of these concepts are helpful in defining the legacy of a retired nurse. Through their employed years, nurses are engaged in several roles – caregiver, administrator, leader, counselor, and advocate. One’s perception of self influences the nursing roles one assumes, and those roles in turn shape self-perception. Goal Attainment Theory thus encourages nurses to view their legacies through the lens of self and role. This chapter reviews the concepts of self, role, legacy and how these concepts inspire nurses to reflect on their contributions to nursing practice.

Self/Story

A person’s story of self can be important to those who come after the person. The story of self is about one’s legacy; it is about the entire span of a person’s life. Stories of self have a purpose with a beginning, middle, and ultimately an ending. Just as a story in a book can survive for many generations, the legacy of each person can also survive as long as it is written, protected, and shared. King (1981) stated,

A concept of self emerges in the process of growth and development through the lifespan [and] A concept of self influences one’s perceptions and one’s perceptions help develop a concept of self. If this sounds circular, it is, because they are facets of human experience. (p. 142)

Through self, people can identify with others and with the situations they face through life. Hunter and Rowles (2005) wrote in a qualitative study that, “Seemingly more important than family heirlooms were life stories. What people did was more important

than what they had. As a result, autobiographical materials emerged from the interviews as something important to pass along through generations” (p. 336). Through in-depth interviews, Hunter and Rowles’s study looked at legacy as it related to 38 women between the ages of 31-94. Their study affirmed that a story about self could provide a meaningful description of the human facets of a person’s life. As such, stories can show various snapshots of the person’s life when looking through the lens of legacy. A retired nurse can reflect on the many snapshots of her/his life like looking at facets of a crystal. Each facet is part of one’s personal life story, and the crystal with all its facets represents the whole. Soren Kierkegaard (n.d.), a Danish philosopher who lived 1813-1855 said, “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards” (p. 1). Looking backwards at the facets of one’s life is viewing life through the lens of legacy.

Critical analysis is required to write about self. One begins by looking to the past, which provides an opportunity to review life and find facets of a life well lived. Nurses have been in a unique profession and may not attempt to review the complexities of this experience. Many retired nurses may not even begin to talk about themselves because they do not think it will be of interest to others. Leider and Shapiro (2004) stated, “Yet, it is commonplace that from the most ordinary lives often come some of the most extraordinary tales” (p. 18). Also, “Recalling our story is essential to the challenge and privilege of finishing well in life” (p. 20). Finishing life indicates a continued and daily involvement, and new snapshots or facets of one’s story of self continue into the retirement years. Leider and Shapiro described story in the following way:

Story is what makes us human, after all. Among the animals, we, perhaps, alone, retain this sense of legacy – this sense that living well means more than just

surviving. Lions and birds care for their young, but human beings give to their children something with much deeper nourishment: the notion of story – passing something on to others after we pass on. (p. 28)

Life is a story; humans have the capacity to write the story of self, which can be a part of the legacy to leave to family, friends, and community. It is a choice to leave a story, and legacy is the story one leaves about the journey of self, whether written as documented history or simply left to memory.

Role

From the time people are born, they are filling roles such as infant, child, youth, student, daughter, son, nurse. The roles people fill in life become their identity. Nurses fill a variety of roles that are expressed throughout their professional nursing careers, as the positions they assume and their practice responsibilities. Each role provides different opportunities, and the identity of each nurse will be different depending on the roles she/he has held. As King (1981) noted, each role a nurse assumes will include interactions with people and society. As each nurse expands her/his professional career, the facets of the crystal continue to grow. The professional colleagues a nurse works with and the variety and number of patients encountered are expanding the facets of the nurse's life. Giroux (2011) worked 36.5 years for the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System. In an editorial at her time of retirement, she reflected on how roles come in many forms. Like ripples of water, roles can influence many people of whom one is never aware. The non-professional roles people play in retirement continue to build a legacy as well. Family, friends, the community, and professional activities continue to grow the crystal, continuing to add facets of life experiences to the whole of life.

By reflecting on their multiple roles, retired nurses can see their involvement with future generations. This caring is evident through all the roles nurses have played throughout their careers and into retirement. Psychologist Erik Erikson (Erikson, E. & Erikson, J., 1997) defined the human developmental roles from birth to death. The eighth of nine stages in adulthood is defined as Generativity versus Stagnation, and the psychosocial crises are “to care” (Erikson, E. & Erikson, J., 1997, p. 57). This is appropriate and defining for the many caring roles nurses have during their professional careers and beyond. The ninth stage is Integrity versus Despair, and the psychosocial crises are “wisdom” (Erikson, E. & Erikson, J., 1997, p. 57). This stage is typically entered after the nurse has retired. The crystal then continues to grow as the daily actions of having been a nurse continue to influence lives with the many facets that shine.

As retired nurses reflect on the roles they have assumed throughout their nursing careers, the concept of generativity becomes more evident. According to Erikson (as cited in McAdams & de St. Aubin, (1992), “Generativity is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 1003). While studying generativity, McAdams & de St. Aubin (1992) stated:

One may be generative in a wide variety of life pursuits and in a vast array of life settings, as in work life and professional activities, volunteer endeavors, participation in religious and political organizations, neighborhood and community activism, friendships, and even one’s leisure-time activities. (p. 1003)

As such, generativity shows continuing involvement with life and how contributions to a legacy through many roles continue through the life span. Thus, nurses may continue the

role of caregiver far beyond their retirement. As is so often quoted, “once a nurse, always a nurse.”

Legacy

Legacy includes genetic and family histories, and it changes and grows as a person ages; the total of life is what determines a personal legacy. Leider and Shapiro (2004) discussed retirement as the second half of life and used “a place at the fire” as a metaphor for legacy. They stated,

When we claim our place at the fire, we enter into the circle of vital elders who have been the source of wisdom in society since time immemorial. We do this by courageously reexamining and rediscovering who we are, where we belong, what we care about, and what our life’s purpose is. (p. vii)

For retired nurses, finding their “place at the fire” can mean discovering their deep values of service and compassion for the nursing profession that often follows one throughout life and into the retired years. Just as flames around a fire sparkle, so do the facets of crystals. Cooper (2008) in an editorial for *Nursing Forum*, stated,

Nursing as a profession has a legacy ... caring for people. For a long time, this caring was considered the art of nursing. Now, through the process of evidence-based practice, nursing can further validate its scientific aspects as well as its art – the caring process. (p. 115)

Gail Mazzocco was a nurse for 50 years. In an article by Cowperthwaite (2015), Mazzocco reflected on nursing after retirement; she shared a story about Gilda who she (Mazzocco) met by chance. Mazzocco knew she had skills that could help Gilda, who was quite elderly and in poor health. Mazzocco followed up with Gilda over time, with

her home health providers, and with the physician when Gilda moved to hospice care. While she was in hospice, Mazzocco continued to visit Gilda. Gilda died two weeks later. Mazzocco shared with Cowperthwaite (2015), “At the end of my working career, that piece that says, ‘I am a nurse’ is just as strong – actually stronger -- than the day I graduated from nursing school” (p. 12). The facets of the crystal keep multiplying, and the legacy grows stronger.

Summary

Older adults can transfer experiences, knowledge, and wisdom of their past to their family, friends, and community. Likewise, retired nurses have experiences, knowledge, and wisdom to transfer to a new generation of nurses. The action of sharing legacy shows that older adults care about those who follow after them. Through sharing their stories of self, their experiences serving in various nursing roles, and the knowledge and wisdom they have attained throughout their careers, nurses can pass on important wisdom, leave a legacy, and share what they have learned in order to enrich the lives of others. Legacy is not stagnant; time that remains is precious, and individuals continue to grow. With time a person can continue to be active, and the many facets of their lives will continue to shine.

Through the process of leaving a legacy, there are many thoughts that nurses will ponder, and these can be used to devise a personal story of self, a personal definition of role, and ultimately a personal legacy. Chapter Three will cover the methodology used to design and implement this DNP project and will describe the project which is guided by concepts of self and role from theorist Imogene King’s Theory of Goal Attainment. These

concepts guided each retired nurse to explore self and role and ultimately reveal her individual legacy.

Chapter Three: Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses Using the Lens of Legacy

This chapter describes a project that explored the facets of retired nurses' lives using the lens of legacy to re-examine and illuminate what a small group of retired nurses viewed as their most memorable contributions to nursing and how each defined her legacy as a retired nurse. The lens of legacy is how each nurse views her life after retirement and how the facets of her life are seen after a review of self/story and roles served as a professional nurse. The project was supported by the concepts of self/story, roles, and legacy and guided by Imogene King's (1981) Theory of Goal Attainment.

Description of the Project

In individual conversations, five retired female nurses from Bethel Lutheran Church explored the qualities and characteristics of their lives to determine their legacies. As these nurses reexamined and illuminated the totality of their lives, they began to describe unique facets of their lives as they have changed over their lifetimes.

Three of the nurses aged 86, 82, and 73 are from the Silent Generation; this spans births from 1925-1945. Two of the nurses aged 69 and 61 are from the Baby Boomer Generation; this spans births from 1946-1964 (Robinson, n.d.). (See Appendix A for the summary of generations). Elder nurses are leaving the nursing profession to be replaced by younger nurses from both Generation X and the Millennial Generation. The retired nurses have been role models to those currently working who now walk in their shoes.

Initial Contacts

As the project progressed, an individual conversation was held with each participating retired nurse. The first individual conversation was held in the community living room of one of the nurse's senior living center in Rochester, Minnesota. The

remaining four individual conversations were held in a meeting room at the Augsburg University branch campus site at Bethel Lutheran Church. Privacy of each person's name was assured and confidentiality maintained.

Format of Individual Conversations

The format of each meeting included an open-ended conversation. I began each conversation by sharing that I was also a retired nurse and a student in the DNP, Transcultural Nursing track, at Augsburg University. This information included the full title of the project and that a goal of each conversation was to discover each nurse's personal definition of legacy at this time in life. I asked each retired nurse to tell me about herself and her nursing career. I added that later I would have her define her legacy at this time in life. The process included careful listening and gathering of information. I kept notes of each conversation for future reference and verification of information if needed. Each conversation continued as each retired nurse shared her history and memories of her work years in an open-ended conversation format. As the history and experiences of each retired nurse seemed to near conclusion, the topic of legacy was introduced. Each nurse was asked to define her unique legacy and share how she perceived it at this time in her life. Many facets of each retired nurse's life were shared with me, and the information was noted.

Project Implementation

Gathering of information through a conversation with each retired nurse participant was accomplished over several months. A summary of the information will be presented in Chapter Four. What each retired nurse viewed as her legacy through her individual lens contributed to a basic understanding of the legacies of this particular

group of participants. The information from the conversations contributes to the foundation of nursing history. Many facets of nurses' lives shine throughout this project as nurses shared their stories of self, the roles they held throughout their careers, and the legacies they shared with me.

Nursing Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

Theory Concepts

In connecting theory to legacy, the concept of self is important. According to Imogene King (1981), through growth and development, the concept of self assists in the development of self. Through self, people identify with others and with the situations they face through life. The concept of self/story is essential to understanding the project. King (1981) referenced characteristics of self as (a) "Self is a dynamic individual" which helps people to maintain a balance in life. (b) "Self is an open system" which refers to interactions with others and the environment. (c) "Self is goal-oriented" which directs a person's activities to self-fulfillment (p. 26, 27). Each retired nurse is an individual and unique person. As such, each has a personal belief system and knows where she fits into her world personally and professionally. Likewise, she knows her strengths and her accomplishments. The self is an interactive person, and for the retired nurse, required critical analysis to look at those who have impacted her life and those whose lives she has impacted.

Along with the importance of self is that of role. According to King (1981), "A concept of role required individuals to communicate with one another and to interact in purposeful ways to achieve goals" (p. 91). The concept of role covers involvement with life from birth to death. Roles define a nurse's identity and combined with her story of

self develops her legacy. Varied and increasingly complex roles continue throughout the working years and beyond. Nursing roles have an impact on many people throughout one's career. These interactions are viewed as the many facets of one's life. Eventually, the nurse retires and transitions to other roles as life continues. The nurse as self, and as she transitions through roles, her experiences become a story that describes her legacy.

The project affirmed King's (1981) concepts of self and role combining to form the foundation of each nurse's legacy. In individual conversations, each retired nurse viewed life through her unique lens, so responses varied. These included descriptions of legacy in the following ways:

- “What we leave for our next generation ... giving, loving, caring.”
- “Whatever vocation you have chosen as a career, develop it, succeed as much as you can, and enjoy yourself.”
- “(My) body of work, accomplishments that might help the future. Set about doing good work so people could be well. Be an example for further education.”
- “Help family and friends with medical information, explain, help them understand, go to appointments, be extra support.”
- “Character, ethics, integrity. Live my faith, pray for family, Christian by words and actions. Nursing was always a calling.”

This variety of answers shows some of the many facets of their lives that contribute to legacy.

How Theory Supports the Project

Through their years, nurses study and ultimately work as professionals. They are consistently demonstrating attainment of goals through role accomplishments. They

master many roles through their careers, growing and changing as their knowledge, skills, and abilities grow. Self and role are strong concepts in King's (1981) Theory of Goal Attainment, and they support the attainment of goals retired nurses described through the working years. Roles the retired nurses who participated in this project accomplished include the following:

- Clinical head nurse, clinical units coordinator
- Nursing administration
- School nurse
- Public health nurse, county health nurse
- Program developer across the age span
- Developer of in-service education programs
- Teacher
- National health program – Great American Smokeout educator
- Coordinator for continuing education and higher learning
- Specialized nurse (maternity, orthopedics, rheumatology, pulmonary, cardiology, radiology, dialysis, bone marrow transplant)

These are just some of the roles identified by the conversations with retired nurses.

Information learned from these conversations demonstrated their vast knowledge, skills, and abilities. Continued interest in the profession through professional growth is impressive and shows how reflective the many facets of the nursing career are and will continue to be in retirement.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model (Figure 1) developed to depict this project is a lamp that is representative of the history of nursing. Florence Nightingale (2018) is often referenced as “the lady with the lamp” as she is often depicted as making rounds with an oil lamp in her hand. Through her actions of caring for soldiers during the Crimean War, it can be assumed she attained many goals through her work and influenced the lives of more people than can ever be counted. Through the use of many basic health concepts, she grounded the nursing profession. In the model, the flame represents the ever-present passion of nurses while working in the nursing profession. Two of the gems represent the self and story. The third gem represents roles. Self and role are two strong concepts King (1981) discussed in her Goal Attainment Theory. The facets of the crystals represent each nurse’s working experiences to retirement and beyond. Each nurse has influenced the lives of so many people, certainly too many interactions and facets to ever count. The arch represents the lens through which each nurse looks to define her legacy.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



How the Theory Advances Nursing Practice

The project has implications for health and well-being of past, present, and future nurses. The information guides students and those currently working to a meaningful vision of the nursing profession. It demonstrates the impact on patients and communities that a nursing career can have. The hope is this will be inspirational. It is a look at the many facets of the nursing profession through the lens of individual nurses as they reflected on their legacies. It shows a connection between the working years and the retired years. It demonstrates the many roles nurses have had during the working years. Memories of the retired nurses, as they each shared their legacy, illuminated how valuable the profession has been to them and how valuable they have been to the profession. Nurses hold positions of trust and respect. The strength of this project is in the shared legacies of each retired nurse as she willingly shared her story of self, the roles she held during the nursing career, and the personal legacy she views through her lens. The project reached into the past and brought forth the value of nursing as a profession and looked at the value of retired nurses' lives. This group of retired nurses from Bethel Lutheran Church has much to share with the nursing profession and with each other.

Summary

Hearing retired nurses define their individual legacies gives a perspective of nursing that is of value to the nursing profession. Evaluation of this process demonstrated how the information could be utilized and perhaps expanded to share with others, to include nursing students, working nurses, and other retired nurses. Chapter Four will review information obtained from the individual conversations; themes will be discovered and reviewed to support the legacy of retired nurses.

Chapter Four: Evaluation and Personal Reflection

During individual conversations with each retired nurse, I provided time and space to each nurse to share her story of self and the many roles she held during the working years. Listening to the stories was inspiring and time well spent for each of the nurses who participated in this project and, of course, for me. Each retired nurse had a wealth of rich memories for the precious years spent in the nursing profession and transitioning into the retirement years.

As each retired nurse shared in conversation, memories resulted in the heart of her work, the essence of her legacy. Like elders around a fire, review of each professional life and the roles that each nurse occupied brought forth reflections of a life dedicated to serving others, of leadership, of example, and of caring. As the story of self unfolded, more and more facets began to shine, way too many to ever count. Facets also represent the lives of others that each nurse has impacted, both as professionals, as friends, and as members of families and communities.

Evaluation Process

The format for facilitating nurses' self-reflection was a qualitative process that included an individual semi-structured conversation with each participant. The qualitative process allowed these retired nurses to reveal an understanding of the concept of their individual legacies. All participants were members of Bethel Lutheran Church and were available for the project. The project was implemented by having an individual conversation with me. After five conversations, saturation of categories or themes was reached. Responses, while individual, were similar in type to the identified concepts of self, role, and legacy at this post-retirement time in life. Each nurse shared information

about herself (story) and her professional life (roles) and then a definition of her legacy. Personal space for thought was allowed to formulate the legacy. It can be assumed that each nurse spoke honestly and from her heart and each was considered trustworthy and reliable.

In addition to the designated concepts of self, role, and legacy, it became evident other elements were important and became themes for future review. These themes are a dedication to healthy living, leading a religious life, continued learning, and the belief that “once a nurse, always a nurse.”

Critical Reflection

While describing a legacy at this time in life, the retired nurse is the elder around the fire (Leider & Shapiro, 2004) reflecting on the knowledge, skills, and abilities she has shared and will continue to share with the community, with family, and with friends. To reflect on the many people whose lives she has impacted references the uncountable facets of the life dedicated to the nursing profession. Hunter (2008b) stated, “Identity is what each individual creates, out of all the facets of a life” (p. 320). Each retired nurse’s identity is evident in her individual definition of her life, of her legacy.

The legacies of retired nurses are relatively unknown as evidenced by the lack of searchable information to support the subject. One retired nurse, age 86, shared with the Bethel Lutheran Church parish nurse after our conversation, that nobody had ever asked her about being a nurse. There is a wealth of untapped information for retired nurses to share about the nursing profession. Untapped information seems so unlikely given the nursing profession has ranked number one for 16 out of 17 years in the Gallup poll (Carlson, 2017) that ranks the most ethical and honest professionals. “Needless to say, the

American public consistently views nurses quite favorably, and the nursing profession continues to serve as the very lifeblood and connective tissue of the U.S. healthcare system” (p. 1). It seems obvious the people who respond to this poll are the people whose lives or lives of family, friends, and co-workers have been touched by a nurse, or many nurses during their lifetime. These are the facets referenced throughout this project, the impact of each nurse’s care that others remember.

What I learned from these five retired professional female nurses is that legacies, when verbalized and shared, can become increasingly accessible as supportive statements about the nursing profession. Each retired nurse appeared comfortable, eager, and willing to share her story. None of them were in a hurry; each seemed happy, perhaps grateful, that someone wanted to learn about her legacy in retirement. Four of the conversations were 90 minutes long, the fifth 60 minutes. These time lengths exceeded my initial expectations, and I was glad to listen as each shared the details of her nursing experience. Each has expressed interest in wanting to know the results of the project and when they will hear about it.

Summary

The time for reflection of self and roles was insightful and shared with enthusiasm. The legacies shared summarized what each nurse had experienced in life and in the roles she had occupied. Each nurse was grounded in her perspective of legacy, each had made meaningful contributions to the nursing profession, and each chose words that expressed her legacy at this time in life. These stories of self and roles will continue to grow throughout the entire life span. Chapter Five will reflect on ideas for future projects on the subject of nursing’s legacy.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Personal Reflection

Reflecting on Imogene King's (1981) Theory of Goal Attainment, it can be said that nurses' lives in retirement continue to be open to dynamic interactions with various systems: personal (self), interpersonal (roles), and social which supports the concept of legacy. Like all persons, nurses are open systems interacting and reacting to other open systems throughout their professional lives as well as in retirement. During the semi-structured individual conversations, each of the retired nurses shared information from each of King's (1981) three systems. Just as King's theory is structured on the framework of these three systems, I found the stories of self and the roles occupied by the nurses to be grounded on the theory also. Each nurse talked about her life in a lengthy conversation to share personal experiences (stories of self) and listed many roles she had occupied. The life of each retired nurse involved many interactions through her career, too many ever to count as noted previously. Each nurse has served society, both professionally and personally, to include interactions with patients, family, friends, and the communities in which each nurse lives. These are the valuable facets of each professional life.

To Consider

This project looked at legacy using an individual conversational format; it assisted each retired nurse to look at the high impact and value of her years in the profession. The project assisted the retired nurses to picture the facets as they represent the many lives the nurses have impacted. Other projects to determine a nurse's legacy might involve focus groups, a questionnaire, and a longitudinal study. These would involve a variety of other formats.

Future Areas of Study

1. For a structured format, one might consider using Hunter's and Rowle's (2005) *Legacy Typology* (see Appendix B for the typology framework) in a structured setting. This typology format covers individually, the subjects of biologic elements (genetic, health, body), material elements (heirlooms, possessions, symbols), and values elements (personal, social, cultural). The items specified in each subject could be introduced by a project leader; each retired nurse would write down appropriate personal reflections in each category, as applicable. Lastly, the focus would be on the term legacy where each retired nurse would combine elements into a personal typology, an individual legacy. This would be a highly structured format with a leader and a focus group model.
2. A study with a focus on the generative years could be useful to determine the legacy of retired nurses. The eighth stage is "to care" (Erikson, E. & Erikson, J., 1997, p. 57). Through reflections and defining the personal legacy, retired nurses would review these generative years, the working years, and list caring aspects of these years. Then continuing, the ninth stage "wisdom" would expand the reflections as retired nurses would review the impact they left on others to include patients, family, friends, and the community. This study might work best in a questionnaire format which is returned and evaluated.
3. In the current project, four additional subjects, beyond the identified concepts, emerged. These warrant further study. These subjects identified by the retired nurses in conversation are a dedication to healthy living, following a religious life, continuing life-long learning, and the belief and experience that "once a nurse,

always a nurse.” As these were common themes identified by the nurses, a focus group setting could be designed to review these themes and determine their value as a part of the legacy.

4. Many other demographics would be of interest, for example, the legacy of male nurses, US Public Health Service nurses, other military nurses, prison nurses, Indian reservation nurses, the individual generations, and the legacy of nursing educators. Perhaps even a longitudinal study including student nurses who could identify a hopeful legacy in school and 5 or 10-year updates could be considered.

Implications and Impact

The purpose of this project was for professional retired nurses to reflect on their past practice and retirement activities to identify a personal legacy. The goal was to learn the valuable impact each retired nurse has had on so many people, those facets too many to count. Also, each retired nurse had the opportunity to review her professional life and see the many contributions she made, to view herself as an elder in the community, and to realize the value of what she has given to society.

Summary

As noted in Chapter Three, this project shows the connection between the working and retired years. While the memories each nurse shared illuminated the personal value of the profession, I believe the information can also be valuable when discovered in a group setting. This project is about five retired professional nurses who spent a career working supporting each other, and helping patients to heal or to leave this world with dignity. Future projects can look deeper into the rich and rewarding experiences of the past, and further define the legacy of retired nurses.

References

- 25 famous nurses – past to present: World’s popular nurse professionals. (2016).
Retrieved from <http://www.pulseuniform.com/coffee-time/25-famous-nurses-past-to-present-world’s-popular-nurse-professionals/>
- American Nurses Association. (n.d.). *What is nursing?* Retrieved from
<http://www.nursingworld.org/EspeciallyForYou/what-is-nursing>
- Carlson, K. (2017). *Nurses ranked #1 most ethical profession by 2017 Gallup poll.*
Retrieved from <https://nurse.org/articles/gallup-ethical-standards-poll-nurses-rank-highest/>
- Cooper, P. (2008). Our legacy. *Nursing Forum, Journal Compilation*, 43(3), 115. doi:
10.1111/j.1744-6198.2008.00110.x
- Cowperthwaite, C. (2015). Ever the nurse – north carolina nurses association member
reflects on nursing post retirement. *Tar Heel Nurse*, 77(4), 12.
- EBSCO Health. (2018). *The index to nursing and allied health literature.* Retrieved from
<https://health.ebsco.com/products/the-cinahl-database>
- Erikson, E., & Erikson, J. (1997). *The life cycle completed.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Giroux, J. (2011). Life legacy – a work in progress. *Urologic Nursing*, 31(2), 68.
- Hunter, E. G. (2008a). Legacy: The occupational transmission of self through actions and
artifacts. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 15(1), 48-54.
doi:10.1080/14427591.2008.9686607
- Hunter, E. G. (2008b). Beyond death: Inheriting the past and giving to the future,
transmitting the legacy of one’s self. *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying*,
56(4), 313-329. doi:10.2190/OM.56.4.a

- Hunter, E. G., & Rowles, G. D. (2005). Leaving a legacy: Toward a typology. *Journal Of Aging Studies, 19*(3), 327-347. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2004.08.002
- Kierkegaard, S. (n.d.). *Soren Kierkegaard quotes*. Retrieved from https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/soren_kierkegaard
- King, I. (1981). *A theory for nursing: Systems, concepts, process*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Leider, R., & Shapiro, D. A. (2004). *Claiming your place at the fire: Living the second half of your life on purpose*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- McAdams, D. P., & de St. Aubin, E. (1992). A theory of generativity and its assessment through self-report, behavioral acts, and narrative theses in autobiography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*(6), 1003-1015. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.62.6.1003
- Newman, M.A., Sime, A. M., & Corcoran-Perry, S.A. (1991). The focus of the discipline of nursing. *Advances in Nursing Science, 14*(1), 1-6. doi:10.1097/00012272-
- Nightingale, F. (n.d.). *Florence Nightingale biography*. Retrieved from <https://www.biography.com/people/florence-nightingale-9423539>
- Robinson, M. (n.d.). *The generations, which one are you?* Retrieved from <https://www.careerplanner.com/Career-Articles/Generations.cfm>
- Watson, J. (2016). *Jean Watson: Nursing theory*. Retrieved from <http://www.nursing-theory.org/theories-and-models/watson-philosophy-and-science-of-caring.php>

Appendix A

The Generations

Which Generation are You?

By Michael T. Robinson

These are Western Cultural Generations. Japan and Asia and portions of Europe will have their own generational definitions based on major cultural, political, and economic influences.

| Generation Name | Births Start | Births End | Youngest Age Today* | Oldest Age Today* |
|---|--------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| The Lost Generation - The Generation of 1914 | 1890 | 1915 | 103 | 128 |
| The Interbellum Generation | 1901 | 1913 | 105 | 117 |
| The Greatest Generation | 1910 | 1924 | 94 | 108 |
| The Silent Generation | 1925 | 1945 | 73 | 93 |
| Baby Boomer Generation | 1946 | 1964 | 54 | 72 |
| Generation X (Baby Bust) | 1965 | 1979 | 39 | 53 |
| Xennials - | 1975 | 1985 | 33 | 43 |
| Generation Y - The Millennials - Gen Next | 1980 | 1994 | 24 | 38 |
| iGen / Gen Z | 1995 | 2012 | 6 | 23 |

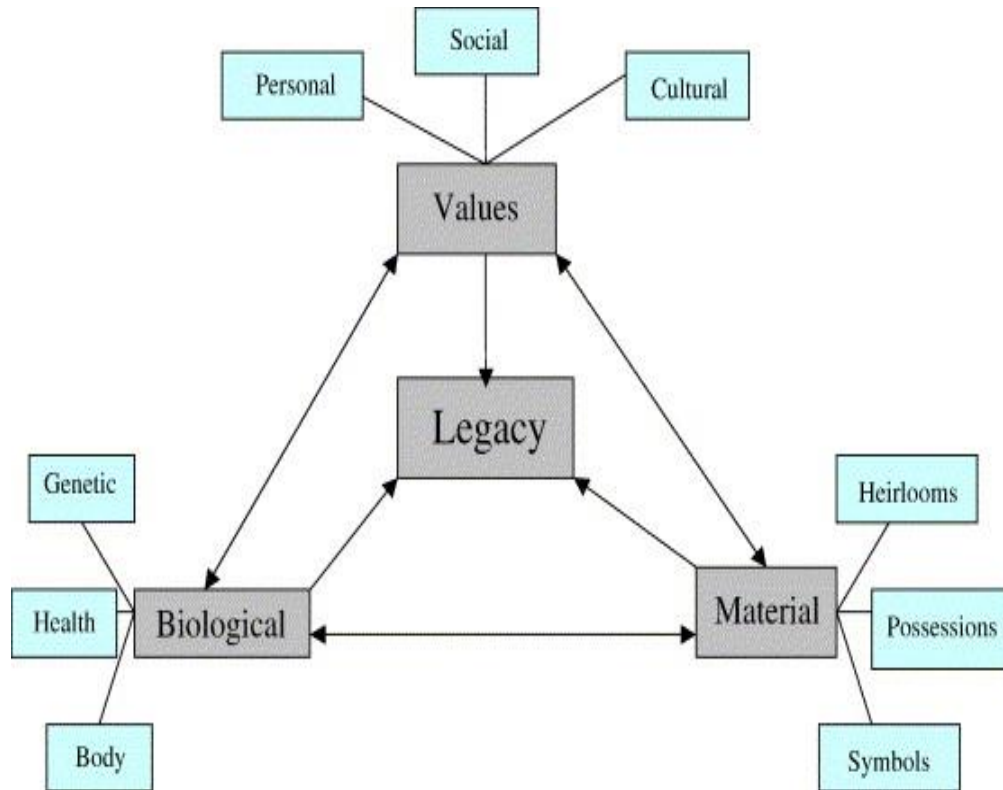
(Robinson, n.d.)

Appendix B

Leaving a Legacy: Toward a Typology

Elizabeth G. Hunter and Graham D. Rowles

LEGACY TYPOLOGY



Exploring the Lives of
Retired Nurses
Using the Lens of Legacy
Verliss Keller-Miller MS, RN



Purpose of the Project

- **To learn directly from a select group of professional retired nurses how they define legacy in their personal and professional lives.**
- **What do retired nurses' lives look like through the lens of legacy from their own perspective?**

OBJECTIVES

- **Define rationale to study legacy of retired nurses.**
- **Recognize King's Theory of Goal Attainment.**
- **Define and discuss the legacy project**
 - **self**
 - **roles**
 - **legacy**

Imogene King Theory of Goal Attainment

- **Personal System- Concept of Self**
- **Interpersonal System- Concept of Role**
- **Social System-Concept of Legacy**



**NURSE ONE****86 YEARS OLD, SILENT GENERATION****Diploma program, Bachelor Science UM****Clinical head nurse, worked for city, school, county****Developed programs for businesses, school children,
youth, management, director of health program****LEGACY****“What we leave for the next generation,
giving, loving, caring.”**

NURSE TWO**82 YEARS OLD, SILENT GENERATION****Diploma program, Bachelor Science****Nursing Administration (NJ) – surgical unit****Finished at College of St. Theresa (MN)****Taught continuing education St. Mary's****LEGACY****“Whatever vocation have chosen as a career, develop it, succeed as much as you can, and enjoy yourself”****NURSE THREE****73 YEARS OLD, SILENT GENERATION****Initial education- diploma program****Worked dialysis 1968-1992, acute, chronic****1980's saw value of BSN- continued education****Nurse Practitioner- Bone Marrow****LEGACY****“Body of work, accomplishments thqat might help the future”****“Set about doing good work so people could be well”**

NURSE FOUR**61 YEARS OLD, BABY BOOMER GENERATION****Education - Associate Degree RN****Pediatrics, labor and delivery, rheumatology,
cardiology****Radiology 25 years, CT, MRI's, sedation****Charge nurse 8 years****LEGACY****“Helped family and friends with medical information,
explain, help them understand, go to appointments,
extra support.”****NURSE FIVE****69 YEARS OLD, BABY BOOMER GENERATION****Initial Education, BSN Augustana,****MSN, WSU Psychology Counseling, Winona****MSN Nursing Administration****Nurse Manager 5 years kidney transplant & dialysis,
orthopedics, chemical dependency, adult and
adolescent****Chair Nursing Department****LEGACY****“Character, ethics, integrity. Lived my faith, pray for
family.”****“Nursing was always a calling; Christian by words and
action.”**



**Presentation
Poster presentation
Sigma Theta Tau International
Kappa Mu, Winona State University
Rochester Community and Technical College, Heintz
Center
April 19, 2018**

References

- Hunter, E. G. (2008). Legacy: The occupational transmission of self through actions and artifacts. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 15(1), 48-54.
- King, I. M. (1981). *A theory for nursing: Systems, concepts, process*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Leider, R., & Shapiro, D. A. (2004). *Claiming your place at the fire: Living the second half of your life on purpose*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Robinson, M. (n.d.). *The generations, which one are you?* <https://www.careerplanner.com/Career-Articles/Generations.com>

Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses Using the Lens of Legacy





Augsburg University Institutional Repository Deposit Agreement

By depositing this Content ("Content") in the Augsburg University Institutional Repository known as Idun, I agree that I am solely responsible for any consequences of uploading this Content to Idun and making it publicly available, and I represent and warrant that:

- I am either the sole creator or the owner of the copyrights in the Content; or, without obtaining another's permission, I have the right to deposit the Content in an archive such as Idun.
To the extent that any portions of the Content are not my own creation, they are used with the copyright holder's expressed permission or as permitted by law. Additionally, the Content does not infringe the copyrights or other intellectual property rights of another, nor does the Content violate any laws or another's right of privacy or publicity.
The Content contains no restricted, private, confidential, or otherwise protected data or information that should not be publicly shared.

I understand that Augsburg University will do its best to provide perpetual access to my Content. To support these efforts, I grant the Board of Regents of Augsburg University, through its library, the following non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty free, worldwide rights and licenses:

- To access, reproduce, distribute and publicly display the Content, in whole or in part, to secure, preserve and make it publicly available
To make derivative works based upon the Content in order to migrate to other media or formats, or to preserve its public access.

These terms do not transfer ownership of the copyright(s) in the Content. These terms only grant to Augsburg University the limited license outlined above.

Initial one:

[X] I agree and I wish this Content to be Open Access.

[] I agree, but I wish to restrict access of this Content to the Augsburg University network.

Work (s) to be deposited Exploring the Lives of Retired Nurses

Title: Using the Lens of Legacy

Author(s) of Work(s): Verliss L. Keller-Miller

Depositor's Name (Please Print): Verliss L. Keller-Miller

Author's Signature: Verliss L. Keller-Miller Date: 5-31-2018

If the Deposit Agreement is executed by the Author's Representative, the Representative shall separately execute the Following representation.

I represent that I am authorized by the Author to execute this Deposit Agreement on the behalf of the Author.

Author's Representative Signature: _____ Date: _____