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The development and testing of a conceptual model for the analysis of contemporary developmental relationships in nursing

Caroline M. Wright
University of Wollongong

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**THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE
ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTAL
RELATIONSHIPS IN NURSING**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Caroline M. Wright, RN, RMN, Dip.Teach.(Nurs), MA(Hons).

**DEPARTMENT OF NURSING,
1992.**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop and statistically analyse a conceptual model of contemporary developmental relationships in nursing. The conceptual model was formulated a priori and was based on both empirical and conceptual literature. No attempt was made to draw a distinction between the concepts of preceptor and mentor and focused on all helping, supporting, and developmental relationships that nurses form with their colleagues.

The study population was selected by means of stratification by area of work and random selection, and was drawn from the nursing population in hospitals and higher education institutions in New South Wales (n=445). A non-experimental retrospective research design was utilised for this study. Analysis of the conceptual model using structural equation modelling (SEM) was performed on data supplied by registered nurses (n=349) on a questionnaire. Follow-up telephone interviews were also undertaken with a convenience sample drawn from the respondents willing to participate further in the research study.

An instrument was developed by the researcher to collect data on the professional values of nurses (16 nurturing and 16 achievement items). Instrument evaluation using reliability and validity analysis measures is reported.

The study aimed to: 1) develop a conceptual framework of developmental nursing relationships from a literature review of personality, preceptorship and mentorship studies from both the conceptual and empirical literature; 2) identify reliable indicators to measure the above abstract concepts within the context of developmental relationships in nursing; 3) statistically analyse the conceptual model of developmental relationships in the occupation of nursing; and 4) expand the conceptual model through the development of the theoretical links between the abstract constructs based on the research findings from this nursing study.

The constructs examined in this study were: **Individual Personality (IP)** as measured by **Achievement Personality**, **Professional Values (PV)** as measured by loading the **Achievement** and **Nurturance** factors of the Wright Professional Value Inventory, **Work Context (WC)** a composite measure of area of nursing practice which was weighted by the number of years in the present position, and **Developmental Relationships (DREL)** as measured by loading the total number of relationships formed as a giver and as a receiver and the type of relationship variable (collegial vs supervisory).

Analysis of results confirmed the positive significance of paths from **Individual Personality** to **Work Context**, from **Professional Values** to **Work Context**, and from **Work Context** to **Developmental Relationships**. **Professional Values** was found to have a higher indirect effect on **Developmental Relationships** than **Individual Personality**. Although the hypotheses were supported, the predictive power of the model was relatively low (.153) indicating

the need for a search for more variables that are critical to the model to improve its predictive power.

The data supplied from follow-up interviews indicated that even though registered nurses described the relationship in different terms, almost all saw the relationship as a developmental one.

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