



***THE NATURE OF THE DISCIPLINE OF NURSING:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS***

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the nature and essence of the discipline of Nursing. The purpose of the study is to examine the present emergent discourses within Nursing, in a range of Settings in which Nursing work occurs. These included the Regulatory, the Bureaucratic, the Professional Industrial, the Academic, the Intensive Care and the Medical Settings. The journey begins through the comparison of some emergent Nursing discourses from the time of Nightingale to the contemporary times of the 1990s. An overview of the influences of change on the development of Nursing as a discipline within Australia are presented.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part I contextualises the fields of discursive formation and presents a descriptive ethnography of each of the six Settings. Part II presents the theoretical perspectives of the multiple methodologies used interactively to collect data and to interpret the meanings represented in the emergent discourses from each of the Settings. Part III provides a 'map' of the domain of Nursing. With a strong influence from Foucault, the examined discourses from the fields are presented as they emerged as predominant, subdiscursive and transformative discourses.

The results of the research show that regardless of the Setting, the predominant discourses suggest the importance of reducing the disorder of providing health care to a manageable order through highly skilled, reflective, efficient and organised practice. The subdiscourses express the essence of Nursing through the 'taken-for-granted' values that represent the beliefs and ideals of nursing knowledge and nursing practice. The discursive transformations show the value of fused horizons of knowledge through the application of recognisable knowledge from other disciplines. In conclusion the nature of the discipline of Nursing is represented by a diffuse and wide spreading domain which is not limited to the bedside nor to the academy, but is present in a range of different Settings through the expression of different knowledge related to nursing work.

In summary the results of this study reveal the nature of the discipline of Nursing to be characterised predominantly through an epistemological field reflecting discourses of multiple realities regarding the reduction of disorder to order, guided by ontological beliefs reflecting the essence of Nursing, enriched through transformations of knowledge reflecting the fusion of horizons of knowledge from a number of related disciplines with that of Nursing.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Jennifer May Watson

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Terminology note: When the term Nursing is used as a noun to name the discipline or the profession it appears with a capital. When the term nursing is used as a verb or an adjective it appears in lower case.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Accident and Emergency	A&E
Assistant Director of Nursing	ADON
Australian Council of Trade Unions	ACTU
Australian Nursing Council Inc.	ANCI
Australian Nursing Federation	ANF
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Clinical Nurses	CNs
Clinical Nurse Consultant	CNC
Cerebral Venous Pressure	CVP
College of Advanced Education	CAE
Director of Nursing	DON
Enrolled Nurses	ENs
Full-time Entitlement	FTE
Graduate Nurses	GNs
Graduate Nurse Programme	GNP
Health Care Agency	HCA
Information Technology	IT
Medical Officer	MO
Nursing Automated Systems Implementation Committee	NASIC
Nurse Manager	NM
Patient Care Nurses	PCNs
Resident Medical Officers	RMOs
Registered Nurses	RNs
Senior Nurse	SN
Team Leader	TL
Trades and Labour Council	TLC
United Trades and Labor Council	UTLC
World Health Organisation	WHO

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