

Boundaries for professional development of nurses: a sociological approach

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Presenters

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Introduction: Nursing occupational category has been basically analyzed under two lenses: gender and academization. On the one hand, there is an extensive literature on gender and the ways in which it has an effect in nursing work relationships, particularly shaped as forms of control and exploitation amongst occupations. On the other hand, the effect of further schooling in developing simple tasks into formal occupations, which is reflected in theorization, empirical research and postgraduate studies. These lenses, however, seem to be insufficient.

Objectives: This paper, as a part of my PhD research, seeks to work through some troublesome issues of the dominant ways of seeing and thinking professionalism and professional work in healthcare, emphasizing in Chilean hospitals and, particularly, Chilean nurses. I try to bridge a very significant gap in the current literature on professional development, taking into account the central concepts of class and ethnicity as they are constructed in labour interactions.

Methodology: Ethnography-based research focused on nursing social behaviour. Relationships with other occupational categories have been explored, in the context of the hospital as a socially organized institution. This fact supposes nursing scope is shaped by an evolving occupational system, rather than a set of traits that defines the institutional form of a given occupation.

Results: The analysis shows how class and ethnicity, in combination with other social variables, lead to different outcomes in terms of development, life opportunities, and professional development for different categories of healthcare workers. This fact is evident, especially in terms of class behaviour, which emerges as an important barrier of nursing development.

Conclusions: Analyzing nursing cannot longer disregard the significance of social matters such as class and ethnicity in healthcare evolving system. Noticeably, these concepts have been systematically overlooked despite their peculiar social and political relevance, or at best unsuitably analyzed under the influence of mostly Anglo-American theory. New concepts and categories must be added to the analysis of nursing as an occupation. Class consciousness, for instance, must be taken into account for the achievement of full professional status.

Palavras-chave: Professional development, social class, ethnicity, gender.

References (max. 4 - APA Norm): Abbott, A (1988). The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Dingwall, R. (2008). Essays on professions. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate. Dubar, C., & Tripier, P. (1988). Sociologie des professions. Paris: Armand Colin. Wright, E. O. (2005). Approaches to class analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.