

The social space of nursing in Western Switzerland. Topology of a profession.

Research topic.

Sociological, anthropological and historical approaches of the nursing profession are strongly influenced by U.S. research tradition from the second half of the twentieth century. The latter is characterized by a predominance of interactionist approaches which depict the nursing profession as a relatively homogenous entity, defined by its relationship with the medical profession. While taking cue from this tradition, the present research aims to break from some of its aspects, viewing the nursing profession as a social space possessing certain field properties. The objective is to demonstrate in which ways this profession forms a relatively autonomous system composed of specific positions which entertain competitive relationships with each other. We thus propose to answer a triple question: 1) How does the space of professional positions structure itself within the nursing profession? 2) How does the space of opinions and beliefs structure itself within the nursing profession? 3) What relationship unites both structures?

Method.

An exploratory research based on 20 interviews with nurses as well as a documentary analysis has been done in 2012 and allowed to uncover the main structuring lines of the nursing professional space. On this basis, a questionnaire has been designed and forwarded to nurses throughout Western Switzerland. The data processing will favor multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), as it entertains an affinity with the concept of field.

Research team

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