

**Title: An Exploration of Capability in Nurse Practitioner Practice in Primary Care****Author:** Martha M. Whitfield, MS, MEd, APRN, PhD Student**Academic Institution:** Queen's University, PhD in Nursing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Doctoral Student (Proposal Development Phase)**Supervisor:** Rosemary Wilson, RN, PhD

**Background:** Nurse practitioner (NP) education in the United States and Canada has historically utilized competency-based models<sup>1</sup>. However, given a lack of consistent competencies across NP education and practice settings, capability may be better suited to the assessment of advanced practice nursing. Capability allows for unanticipated variation in practice environment and skills<sup>2</sup>, where competence may imply ability to perform anticipated skills only.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to explore *capability* in the context of NP practice in primary care.

**Methodology:** This study will use a three phase stepwise emergent design:

**Phase One:** A concept analysis of capability as applied to healthcare practice and education, incorporating the approach suggested by Paley.<sup>3</sup>

**Phase Two:** A phenomenographic study of capability in NP practice, using the treatment of opioid use disorder in primary care as an exemplar. Through this study, I will explore the research question: *How is the concept of capability understood in relation to nurse practitioner practice in treating opioid use disorder in primary care?* As a qualitative methodology, phenomenography focuses on describing variations in the collective experience of a phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

**Phase Three:** An investigation of how capability frameworks fit with the lived experience of NPs to answer the (tentative) research question: *Can a capability framework such as that identified by Gardner et al.<sup>5</sup> provide a useful way to assess NP practice in the treatment of opioid use disorder in primary care?*

**Implications for Nursing**

The NP profession needs a robust self-understanding of the NP role, purposeful preparation through education, and capability in practice. Delineating capability in the context of the NP role will inform NP education and practice and help to explain NP practice to regulators, policy makers and the general public, with the ultimate goal of contributing to better care for patients.

**Word Count: 293****References**

- <sup>1</sup>O'Connell et al. (2014); <sup>2</sup>Fraser and Greenhalgh (2001); <sup>3</sup>Paley (2021); <sup>4</sup>Trigwell (2006);  
<sup>5</sup>Gardner et al. (2007)