

Nursing's Political Development

Cohen et al. (1996) developed the Stages of Nursing's Political Involvement to analyze political development and level of participation in the political processes of nurses. This framework ranges from understanding the importance of nurse involvement in health policy and politics to including active political participation. Cohen et al. (1996) identified four stages of political involvement, (a) Stage I - *Buy in*, representative of nursing's recognition of the importance of political involvement; (b) Stage 2 - *Self-interest*, which occurs when nurses develop and use its political expertise related to the professions self-interest, (c) Stage 3 - *Political sophistication*, recognition of the importance of activism on behalf of the public, and (d) Stage 4 - *Leading the way*, in the provision of true political leadership in broader healthcare interests that speaks to the public's interests. The framework is considered to be fluid, whereby nurses can enter various phases singularly or in multiple phases of involvement depending on the political issue encountered (Appendix A).

Validity of the Stages of Nursing's Political Development was completed by Wilson (2002) using a descriptive-comparative study of political development. The framework provides a reliable method to actualize nurse's motivation and expansion of political involvement. Nurses, once engaged in the political process, were more likely to progress through the Stages 1-3 (Stage I - *Buy in*, Stage 2 - *Self-interest*, and Stage 3 - *Political sophistication*), more so than achieving Stage 4 - *Leading the way* (Wilson, 2002). Wilson (2002) suggested that this theory, if used as an analytical tool, can provide direct actualization of political involvement. From an educator's perspective, faculty can use the Stages of Nursing's Political Involvement to assess the impact an undergraduate health policy course had on political astuteness and involvement for practicing RNs.

References

Cohen, S., Mason, D., Kovner, C., Leavitt, J., Pulcini, J., & Sochalski, J. (1996). Stages of nursing's political development: where we've been and where we ought to go. *Nursing Outlook*. 6, 259-266.

Wilson, D. (2002). Testing a theory of political development by comparing the political action of nurses and nonnurses. *Nursing Outlook*. 50(1), 30-34.

Appendix A

Progress of Nursing Through Four Stages of Political Development				
(Cohen et al., 1996, p. 260)				
	Stage 1 (Buy In)	Stage 2 (Self Interest)	Stage 3 (Political sophistication)	Stage 4 (Leading the Way)
Nature of Action	Reactive with a specific focus on political or health policy issues	Reactive to nursing issues and broader issues	Proactive on nursing and other health issues	Proactive on leadership and agenda setting for a broad range of health and social policy issues
Language	Learning the political language	Using nursing jargon in concert with political language	Using parlance and rhetoric common to health policy deliberations	Introducing terms that reorder the policy debate
Coalition Building	Political awareness, occasional participation in coalitions or grass roots efforts	Coalition forming among nursing organizations	Coalition forming among nursing groups, active and significant participation in broader health care groups	Initiating coalitions beyond nursing for broad health policy concerns
Nurses as Policy Shapers (not commonly achieved)	Isolated cases of nurses being appointed to policy positions, primarily because of individual accomplishments	Professional associations activate nurses into nursing related lobbying positions	Professional organizations get nurses appointed to health-related policy positions	Many nurses sought to fill nursing and health policy positions because of value of nursing expertise and knowledge