

**Nursing and Allied Health Abstracts**

**Title:** TOWARD AUTHENTIC CARE AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE OTHER

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**Background:** Benner's (1994; 2001a) account of the phenomenon of care reveals how ontological structures of care and particular care-giving practices may foster and/or thwart health over the life course of a particular individual or group. Ontological structures of care can be understood as existential scaffolding or "webs of interlocutors" that facilitate and sustain connection and concern in our lifeworld inclusive of relationships, language, commitments, identity, and recognition, and possibility (Benner 2001b; Taylor, 1985a)

**Method:** The author used phenomenological (interpretive) ethnography to investigate the experience of physical disability and its attached meanings in relation to self, world, and other for adolescents born with spina bifida. Forty-three (43), one-hour interviews were conducted with 11 late-stage adolescents (age 18-24 years) over a 7 month period.

**Results:** Analysis of their narrative accounts illustrated commonalities with respect to the biopsychosocial impact of living with the physical disability of spina bifida. An abbreviated narrative revealing "The Gaze of the Other" is presented and discussed.

**Conclusion:** Findings imply that youth born with spina bifida face biological, psychological, and social challenges that might interfere with normative developmental tasks of adolescence, including identity formation. Greater emphasis needs to be directed toward humanizing and emancipating the physical and social environment for youth with physical disabilities to maximize developmental opportunities and potential while fostering positive identity.