
From the editor

THE ART OF INQUIRY

As the contents of this issue of *Advances in Nursing Science* (16:2) demonstrate, nursing inquiry has grown and developed far beyond the strictly traditional boundaries of science. The manner in which new approaches to scholarship are judged by the community of scholars depends in part on the principles upon which the scholarship of the discipline is founded. At the same time, new approaches to method serve to stretch the limits around which the principles of scholarship are formed and re-formed.

It is clear to me that while there is growing consensus that the strictly traditional forms of inquiry grounded on notions of causality are not wholly adequate to address some of nursing's pressing problems, this consensus in no way moves to the extreme position of discarding these traditional forms of inquiry. The debates that once raged in the discipline over which form of inquiry is best, or most worthy, have given way to substantive discussion of a wide array of methodological developments and the evidence of their adequacy to address the problems of the discipline, or to inform the knowledge of the discipline. These substantive discussions have in turn provided insight concerning the principles upon which scholarship can be judged as worthy to contribute to our social, professional, and disciplinary growth.

Principles of scholarship that I believe are emerging involve the art of inquiry, which in fact brings into focus some of the fundamental purposes for which the "enterprise of scholarship" exists. As humans, we are capable of envisioning new possibilities, of creating ideas and things that would not exist were it not for our marvelous capacity for creativity. The traditional scientific model derives its potential to a large degree from an implicit dependence upon the creativity, flexibility, and openness of the scientist. The very questions posed in the traditional scientific model reflect a creative

process that opens the door for exploring something new and different. Likewise, newly evolving methods of inquiry that grow out of philosophy, the arts, and the humanities, rely heavily upon the artistic talent, the creativity, and the skill of performance of the inquirer. The evolving methods require their own specification of the "rules of conduct" that apply to the method or approach, but these "rules of conduct" are themselves part of the artistic endeavor—that process that creates something refined out of the rough, the raw, the undeveloped.

If we build on the fundamental principle of creative potential where all forms of inquiry are concerned, then we can abandon allegiance to method for method's sake. Instead, as new methodological approaches are explored, developed, implemented, we can ask questions that pertain to the art of the inquiry, such as: "What potential is emerging here that would not exist otherwise?", and "Does this approach inform the discipline concerning the meaning, or the nature of human health experience?" Essentially, these questions, and others like them, bring to the foreground a principle of creativity, a principle of the meaning of human potential.

Worthy scholarship and methods of inquiry need not be bound by preconceived rules of conduct, which in fact are seldom adequate in and of themselves even in the traditional model of science. Rather, worthy scholarship can be judged based on principles that pertain to the art of inquiry: the integrity of the method, the skill of application or performance, and the creative potential that it engenders. As we continue to develop discourse in the discipline that recognizes and develops creativity in the discipline of nursing, nursing will increasingly reflect creativity in our practice, education, and scholarship. It is my hope that this issue of *ANS* contributes substantially to this discourse.

— Peggy L. Chinn, RN, PhD, FAAN
Editor