
From the Editor

VALUES AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

Despite significant advances in the development of knowledge related to women's health, aging, and development, a major disconnect still remains. It amazes me that nurses, most of whom are women, have not yet played a major role in various scientific and political enterprises that could turn this persistent trend around. At the same time, given the immense cultural and social barriers that persist, it amazes me that nurses have accomplished all that they have over the past several decades. Given the fact that in the United States and other democratic countries around the world women are still sadly underrepresented in all levels of government and in all major leadership roles in the private sector, we can hardly expect that women's interests are adequately represented in science, philosophy, or the humanities.

A number of times over the past several months I have been approached by young scholars in nursing and other healthcare disciplines seeking feedback and advice concerning the direction they might take as they start their own program of research. Because of my particular interests and areas of expertise, many approach me wanting to pursue some aspect of women's health. Over and over again they tell me early in our conversation: "I have been told not to develop this idea because it is not fundable." Their ideas are important, their hopes for being able to make a significant contribution to knowledge about women's health and development are worthy and well placed. But they are stopped in their tracks with this one sentence discouraging them from pursuing an area of research that arouses their deep interest and passion.

I am left to ponder exactly what avenue to suggest, and even more important, exactly who is culpable in creating and sustaining this situation. Perhaps the faculties advising students such as these have a level of culpability in allowing the shortage of funding opportunities drive students' decisions. Perhaps even the students have a level of responsibility to frame their ideas and questions in ways that present a more compelling case, and one that connects with the priorities of funding agencies. Perhaps the representatives of funding agencies are culpable to the extent they serve their own interests, and not the fundamental interests of all people in society, including women. Perhaps we all are culpable in that we do not take whatever opportunities we can find to shape the priorities of the funding agencies. We are all indeed culpable to the extent that we ourselves succumb to internalized devaluing and discounting of the interests of women, particularly women who face multiple disadvantages day in and day out.

Certainly the contents of this issue of *Advances in Nursing Science* demonstrate significant efforts to address the needs of women, and illustrate ways in which nurse scholars approach the study of health challenges that women face. I hope that these articles will stimulate you, the reader, to think seriously about the many gaps that persist in knowledge about women and women's health, and ways that you might begin to bring about real shifts in the values that drive our knowledge development enterprise in nursing.

—Peggy L. Chinn, PhD, RN, FAAN
Editor