
From the editor

The term *method* refers to a systematic, logical, and established plan for accomplishing a procedure or task. The process of developing acceptable methods for research and for generating new knowledge is one of the characteristics of a scientific discipline. Some disciplines have not required extensive struggle to establish their preferred methods. Others, like nursing, do require such a struggle. The methods that are developed and established in a discipline are influenced by a wide range of factors, including the nature of the domain of reality that is being studied, the tools that are available for study, multiple factors that influence the reliability and validity of observations and interpretations, and economic, social, and political resources available to the discipline.

The complexity of factors that influence the development of research methods in nursing is compounded by the fact that our current community of scholars have been trained and nurtured, or at least heavily influenced, by other better established disciplines. This recent history has resulted in an unusually wide array of established methods from which to select and mitigated against a concerted collective effort toward a singular methodological approach. Many of the various methods applied in nursing have value for investigating some basic or applied area of concern to nursing. However, as nursing scholars have gained experience in application of their selected research methods and matured in formulating conceptual approaches for interpretation of data, it has become increasingly clear that the *carte blanche* application of all research methods to nursing problems is not entirely satisfactory.

The need for modification of existing methods or for the creation of new methods for the study of nursing problems has become increasingly evident as the domain of nursing's concern has become better understood and articulated by nurse scholars and practitioners. Even though there is not total agreement about what nursing's domain of study is, more and more nurses are leaving the company of those who question, "What is nursing?" and joining those who say with confidence, "I know what nursing is." As we develop a clearer and more consistent picture of our domain of concern and who we are, we will become increasingly influenced by the nature of the phenomena we study in developing research methods. We will be less and less influenced by convenience, fads, or views imposed on us by other related disciplines.

The articles in this issue of ANS do not represent the total effort that is ongoing in our discipline to examine, modify, or create methods for research. Unfortunately we were unable to include several excellent articles that were eligible for publication in this issue because of space limitations. Other literature reflects a wide range of research activity and growing sophistication in the development and use of research methods in nursing. The articles published here reflect the shift that is occurring in nursing toward the critical examination of existing methodologies and the efforts toward developing methods that are well suited for our domain of concern. I hope you will find each of these articles stimulating for both thought and action.

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Editor