

Methodological issues in nursing research: beyond a wax apple

Bronowski¹ tells us that science is the search to discover unity in the variety of nature and the variety of our experiences. Poetry, painting, and the arts are the same search. This author attempts through the language of poetry to search for the sense experiences of living through contemporary methodological issue questions in nursing. The intent is to move beyond the issue of issues and to discover some sense of unity. The question is raised implicitly why our wonderful scholarship has evolved into a search for structural truth rather than dynamic meaning.

Patricia L. Munhall, RN, EdD
Associate Professor
Graduate Program
Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing
Hunter College
New York, New York

When Prufrock sang his love song
"politic, cautious and meticulous:
full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse"^{12(p241)}
he asked us
have we become etherized
are we measuring our lives in coffee spoons?

Making issues out of methodologic ?'s yields
obfuscation
Struggle to the surface from didacticism
to the freedom
of possibilities
of uncategorizing
the colors of time, space, & being (even in the
fourth dimension)

"Everything is alive: what we call dead is an
abstraction."^{3(p174)}

Wax apples
analogue models, systems, stages, symmetry
tasteless, dry, but perfect in stability
and lifelessness
definitions, like wax apples
limit possibilities

2

"There are more things in heaven and earth
than are dreamt of in our hypothesis, and
our observations should be open to
them."⁴(p127)

*Anxiety tolls us miserably
Ultimately says Tillich' from fear of death
So we grope with what
stubbornly remains a mystery
Let's make the unknown, known
Let's create five stages to do it in.*⁶

*Go now (as in the bible) to the podium
and search ye for the truth
Take the knotted, anomalous, confounded
world
and make it orderly & sometimes predictable
but report sometimes on an N. of I.*

*We come and go
Are we pre-paradigm or metaparadigm?⁷
or no paradigm and a
research tradition⁸
Are we qualitative or quantitative
Are we empiricists, historicists or past it
all?⁹*

"Dichotomy is the usual pathway to vulgar-
ization. We take a complex web of argu-
ments and divide it into two polarized
positions—them against us. We then portray
them as a foolish caricature of extremes in
order to put us in a better light."¹⁰(p7)

*And thus we create ideologies,
"isms" and schisms
I like to do this sometimes,
sometimes though it goes too far
to a diversionary extreme
while people (holistic beings) suffer.*

"We re-search and re-search to the point
that we know less and less about more and
more, failing to recognize the relevance or
irrelevance of what we are studying."¹¹(p17)

*99% of bicycle owners also have telephones
is this lawfulness, determinism or causality?
If this is causality,
is it causalism, acausalism or semicausal-
ism?¹²*

*Or is it happenstance
More important perhaps, is it important?*

*I'm not value free
and while so, I can still be a scientist
Laudan¹³ says so
I believe he has read feminist literature
so I think it's OK to have an "ism"
so long as I don't equate it to "truth"*

"... since we have come to the understand-
ing that science is not a description of
'reality' but a metaphorical ordering of
experiences, the new science does not
impugn the old. It is not a question of which
view is 'true' in some ultimate sense. Rather
it is a matter of which picture is more useful
in guiding human affairs."—Willis Har-
man¹⁴

*Worldviews abound, concepts defined
Human being—a biopsychosocial being¹⁵
Nursing Client—biopsychosocial adaptive
system¹⁶
Human being—an irreducible, negentropic
energyfield¹⁷
Nursing Client—unique, total, open system¹⁸
Human being—a self care agent¹⁹*

*What is proposed has naught to do
with truth
It has to do with perception,
interpretation,
unconscious wishes
and stipulation.*

*Somehow we know this esthetically
we see beauty in different things
but where it comes to science*

*is it anxiety, the fear the apple
will not live forever
that prods us to seek the definition*

*Scheffler²⁰ stipulating about definitions
says
there are three kinds
the stipulative
the descriptive
the programmatic*

*Interpretation yields the stipulative
"this is how I see it"
Wishes yield the programmatic
"this is the way I think it should be"
and the descriptive
is what is in your dictionary*

*Go again to the podium
and emerge in contradictions,
hold in your head
two opposing ideas, or maybe three, four
ideas like real apples
vary, unlike supposed "facts"*

"Sit down before fact like a little child, and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, following humbly wherever and to whatever abyss Nature leads or you shall learn nothing."—T.H. Huxley²¹

*Polemics, to what end
New ideas need not immediately
polarize
Though an oppressed group might
tea party together, horizontally
violent.²²*

"But there are times when two or more research traditions, far from mutually undermining one another, can be amalgamated, producing a synthesis which is progressive with respect to both the former research traditions."^{13(p103)}

*Is there one best way
Is there one best outcome
When we focus our lens
on the literature of "issues"
concerning methods, a way of doing some-
thing
Wax apples are juggled about.*

"The perfect method, by definition, leads us on a path of examining small segments and parts of reality apart from the whole and is based on the assumption that a segmented analysis of the parts will yield knowledge of the whole."^{11(p27)}

*However wax apples are not real
and cannot, like imperfect ideas
be expanded to assist
people (unified wholes) with their suffering
or pursuit of happiness.
Surrounded by them, one could die.*

*Trouble started in Eden over a real apple
some might say, but
interpretation of that infamous event
has yielded that it was a gift
from on high, called
self determination*

*We seem though (understandably consider-
ing the anxiety)
to want rules and corresponding rules
We seem to search for truth
Impregnable citadels
Where the hopes, fears & loves
of human beings (self care agents) are dis-
tracting*

*Should nurses study nurses
Should nurses be a concept
within a metaparadigm (or whatever)
Should research be basic and applied
or only applied, or just basic
or in neon lights proclaiming "CLINICAL."*

4

*These are some observations
These are some feeling states
What is written thus far is
stipulative
What is now offered is
programmatic*

*Rather than focus on definition and choices
let us inquire into their construction
their simultaneity
their complementarity
their interdependency
their conjunction*

*Even as I think a contradiction
emerges
mocking
my attempt to make sense out of
a very dangerous
world, but this always happens*

*Comparing and contrasting
the either/or nature of choices
is I think pedantically useful
especially when a student
says
"why can't it be both ways?"*

*Is this programmatic thought
conciliatory
Sterile reductionistic philosophies
would say so,
I, in fact, admire their quest for clarity
if it stops before impoverishment.*

*"One important sign of intellectual maturity
is self consciousness."^{9(p39)}*

*Or in our rising consciousness
we can do as Kierkegaard,
"to create difficulties everywhere"^{23(p194)}*

*This is the beginning of wisdom
to acknowledge the spell
of historical contradictions.*

*Yes this is conciliation
an ethic of ambiguity
an attempt to build some bridges
to present dichotomies
not to choose between
but to angle in for varying images*

*"Insight announces itself in mental images.
Newton's conception of gravity and Ein-
stein's notion of the constant speed of light
came to them as perceptions, as images, not
a hypothesis or conclusions drawn from
logical deduction. Formal logic is secondary
to insight via images, and is never the source
of new knowledge."^{24(p144)}*

*Let us not make methodological issues
another issue for
the
submissive aggressive syndrome²²
the
differences should lead to discourse*

*We do not have to do anything
according to a male prototype
including an offense and a defense
Nor do we have to be linebackers
at conferences, lining up to question and
tackling the jugular*

*Let us spend some time
epistemizing
but remembering again Prufrock
"In the room the women come & go
Talking of Michelangelo"^{2(p239)}
Could that be us?*

*We're in this together
to assist individuals (open systems)*

with problems of disease (alteration in well-
ness)
development (evolution), loneliness, anxiety
hunger
We need not create these problems among
ourselves

Our different angles
enlarge our promise
are to be summative
not negating

but engaging us in
our community of endeavors

I found a wooden apple yesterday
The cost was \$4.99
It had all the practical properties of the wax
and saddened me
though it is no longer fashionable
to be a hippie

Don't we have a karma?

REFERENCES

1. Bronowski J: *Science and Human Values*. New York, Harper & Row, 1965.
2. Eliot TS: The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock, in Perrine L: *Sound and Sense*, ed 2. New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
3. Bohm D, cited by Smith H: Beyond the modern Western mind set. *Teachers College Record* 1981;82 (3).
4. Chronbach L, cited by Reichardt C, Cook T (eds): *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research*. Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage, 1979.
5. Tillich P: *The Courage to Be*. New Haven, Conn, Yale Univ Press, 1952.
6. Kubler-Ross E: *On Death and Dying*. New York, Macmillan, 1970.
7. Conway ME: Toward greater specificity in defining nursing's metaparadigm. *Adv Nurs Sci* 1985;7(4):73-82.
8. Silva MC, Rothbart D: An analysis of changing trends in philosophies of science on nursing theory development and testing. *Adv Nurs Sci* 1984;6(2):1-13.
9. Thompson JL: Practical discourse in nursing: Going beyond empiricism and historicism. *Adv Nurs Sci* 1985;7(4):59-72.
10. Gould SJ: Science and gender. *The New York Times Book Review* 1984;2:45-49.
11. Chinn P: Debunking myths in nursing theory and research. *Image*. 1985;17(2):45-49.
12. Wilson LM, Fitzpatrick JJ: Dialectical thinking as a means of understanding systems-in-development: Relevance to Roger's principles. *Adv Nurs Sci* 1984;6(2):24-41.
13. Laudan L: *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth*. Berkeley, Univ of California Press, 1977.
14. Harman W: *Symposium on Consciousness*. New York, Penguin, 1977.
15. Johnson DE: The behavioral system model for nursing, in Riehl JP, Roy C (eds): *Conceptual Models for Nursing Practice*, ed 2. New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1980.
16. Roy C, Roberts SL: *Theory Construction in Nursing: An Adaptation Model*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1981.
17. Rogers M: Nursing: A science of unitary man, in Riehl JP, Roy C (eds): *Conceptual Models for Nursing Practice*, ed 2. New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1980, pp 329-337.
18. King IM: *A Theory for Nursing: Systems, Concepts, Progress*. New York, Wiley, 1981.
19. Orem DE: *Nursing: Concepts of Practice*, ed 2. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1980.
20. Scheffler I: *The Language of Education*. Springfield, Ill, Charles C Thomas, 1960.
21. Huxley TH, cited by Dossey L: *Space, Time, and Medicine*. Boulder, Colo, Shambhala, 1982.
22. Roberts SJ: Oppressed group behavior: Implications for nursing. *Adv Nurs Sci* 1983;5(4):21-30.
23. Bretall R (ed): *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. New York, Modern Library, 1936.
24. Bohm D: *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.