
From the Editor

DEMYSTIFYING SCHOLARSHIP

Recently members of the Advisory Board engaged in a lively e-mail discussion focused on the tensions involved in demystifying scholarship. The shared interest was to find ways to encourage the *ANS* audience to debate the challenges involved in maintaining high standards of scholarship while presenting scholarly work in accessible, interesting, and engaging ways for students and for practicing nurses.

The *ANS* Author's Guide contains the following brief description of the writing style that we encourage:

ANS insists on readability addressed to a wide audience. The tone of the article should be scholarly but not "stiff." The approach should be both informative and interpretive with some emphasis given to the implications of information presented and to the provision of fresh insights. First person pronouns are acceptable for manuscripts that require an active author's voice. (<http://ans-info.net/ANSathgd.htm#WritingStyle>)

Still, *ANS*, like many other scholarly journals, tends to be viewed as far removed from the venues we most need to reach—the realms of practice, the classrooms in which students learn, and the many places where healthcare policies are discussed and debated. Contrary to a popular misconception, these venues and the realm of scholarship are not separate entities. But the perception persists, and we remain committed to doing what we can to overcome the barriers that prevent scholarship from being accessible, even vitally important.

Members of the Advisory Board have started the discussion to focus our attention on this concern. Here are some excerpts:

I have talked with many faculty and students here who are terrified to submit anything to *ANS* because they do not believe they have a firm enough grasp on theory as it is often presented in many feminist and critical texts. [Recently students confided] to me that they were so afraid of not being seen as scholarly enough by their faculty if they did not continuously speak in "high

scholar" language. We talked about the pros/cons of what this meant to their desire to work with women outside of and across the academe . . . the role of "theoretical discourse" and "scholarly language" in promoting and hindering nursing's agenda of better health for all and bringing all involved groups to the table.

ANS is often held up as the "gold standard" of theory and methodological debate and is seen as daunting for students and practicing nurses. Having a paper published in *ANS* is the highlight of a career! While I wouldn't like to lose that, there is a place for demystifying and simplifying theoretical language.

What is nagging at me is that it seems sometimes we endorse the idea that theoretical/philosophical language has to be, has to remain, difficult. I agree it's hard, but I feel an obligation to bring students to the "region of experience" where we can talk meaningfully about these things in understandable language . . .

We need to strive for clarity in our writing and the manuscripts selected for *ANS*. The highest priority for me is the leadership the journal provides in pushing forward the frontiers of the discipline. Maybe we need more dialogue to clarify our values and to find ways to include as many scholars as possible in the mission of the journal.

Sometimes language and style that seems mystifying turns out to have incredible clarity once the standpoint from which writing is accomplished comes clearer. So [more] dialogue about issues related to whether something is scholarly or simply mystified, . . . and why, should be of interest to the professional community especially in the context of "evidence."

I like the distinction between scholarship and mystification. Sometimes scholarship aims to de-mystify while at others, mystification is misrepresented as scholarship.

We invite *ANS* readers to join in this discussion. Please send your comments and letters to peggy.chinn@uconn.edu. We will continue this important discussion in future issues of *ANS*.

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