

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Qualitative Lens in Nursing Research: A Collective Reflection on Lifelong Learning, Philosophical Praxis, and the 'Why' Behind Care

Erlinda C. Palaganas, PhD, RN, FAAN

With an increase in complicated and dynamic issues of healthcare in contemporary times, a reflective approach is crucial to nursing practice, research, and education. Reflecting is more than just recalling what happened. Instead, it is an active, critical process by which we construct meaning from experience, beliefs, and knowledge. Reflecting also provides an opportunity for nurse practitioners and scholars alike to pause, to question, and to challenge what it is that they do to care and to build knowledge. Applying a reflective approach is akin to exercising self-knowledge while increasing the depth of knowledge, and combining not only theory with practice but also personal experience with professional inquiry. The said process is especially relevant with qualitative research due to our reflective ability impacting questions, methods, and findings from what is gathered from engagement with patients, groups, and systems.

The reflective narratives of three postgraduate student nurses poignantly illustrated the potential for a reflective process to call into attention the philosophical, emotional, and ethical aspects of research. In a series of individual narratives, Luzviminda G. Rivera, Ariene V. Erie, and Rowena S. Manzarate reminded us that reflection is initially a skill that becomes a way of being. Such process is a principle for substantive scholarship, caring practice, and practice informed by society.

Emptying the Cup: Sustained Learning and Meaningful Research

Luzviminda G. Rivera used the metaphor of "emptying one's cup" to highlight intellectual humility for a lifetime of learning. Her observation alluded to an essential axiom of qualitative research: open-mindedness for other ways of knowing and being. Intellectual humility does not equate to a lack of competence, however, yet is an essential attitude for ongoing maturation, questioning, and greater engagement with those towards which nursing science aims to serve.

Rivera's record eloquently captures a nurse researcher's life by more than accomplishment and awards, however, by reflective

practice, community involvement, and a commitment to ongoing learning. Her record demonstrated that research with relevance for nursing is embedded within practice, founded upon day-to-day experiences, ethical responsibilities, and a genuine interest for advancing health equity and evidence-based practice.

Her observations are a thought-provoking and a wake-up call: research is a life of ongoing learning, and good scholarship is a process of working for others. In that case, any researcher is no longer an ivory-tower specialist unto herself, apart from others, but a co-learner and co-collaborator, a receptive ear, an eager questioner, and a producer of meaningful knowledge.

Philosophical Praxis: Transcending Faith and Fact

Ariene V. Erie's article touched upon philosophical nursing research by affirming that philosophy is a lived, concrete experience and is certainly not something distant and abstract, but an integral, real part of the way we produce knowledge. In a reflective mode, Erie examines individual beliefs, what we perceive as truth, and personal awareness's influence upon the research process. Her article showed that epistemology, or the way that we know what we know is a function beyond theory, a dynamic interaction of experience, reflection, and questioning.

By combining traditional philosophical processes of thought with modern forms of knowing, Erie built nursing research into an active dialogue of exchange between the world and the researcher. Not seeking fixed or absolute truth, she emphasized that nursing knowledge by definition is dynamic, contextual, and sensitive to human life's nuances.

The focus of Erie on integrating action and reflection or reflective praxis is at the heart of qualitative inquiry. By recognizing the dynamics of a potentially shifting truth and acknowledging the researcher's own subjectivity, she invited us to approach research not as an independent activity, but as an engaged, ethical, and deeply human process. Through this approach, everyday issues

faced by nursing practice at the forefront draw a more profound understanding for meaningful change.

The 'why' of care: emotion, identity, and research as advocacy

Rowena S. Manzarate's essay is a passionate and personal account of her journey from clinician to aspiring researcher. Her story outlined how affective experiences within the perioperative sphere sparked her interest so that she would explore not only "how" she could enhance care, but also "why" she is concerned about it in the first place.

In utilizing narrative and participatory approaches, Manzarate is able to marry practice with scholarship. Her studies on nurses' and patients' well-being highlight nursing's affective labor as a site for valuable knowledge and as a site for deserving detailed consideration. This work illustrated an increasing emphasis on health equity, social determinants of health, and more comprehensive models of care that consider both caregivers' and patients' experiences.

Above all, Manzarate's reflections reminded us that scholarship in nursing must do more than collect data, that it must take into account real lived experience, lift up unheard voices, and create a common vision for caring and for just care. Her scholarship is a timely reminder that identity, affect, and advocacy are not separate from, but a core part of scholarship.

Underlying Motivations for Care: Feelings, Self-Perception, and Advocacy-Based Research

Rowena S. Manzarate's essay is a beautiful, compelling portrait of her clinical practitioner's metamorphosis from clinician into nascent researcher. It showed how feelings within the world of the operating room sparked her journey of curiosity, driving her toward an inquiry into a sense of what makes care so important, beyond simply a desire for an improvement of "how."

By integrating practice into scholarship using narrative and participatory research methods, Manzarate combines practice and learning. She examines nurses' and patients' well-being and demonstrated that nursing emotional labor involves a lot of intellectual work and sophisticated comprehension, thereby these must be surveyed thoroughly. This article demonstrated increasing awareness, and increasing dedication towards health equity, determinants of health, and inclusive approaches to care that integrate patient and provider perspectives.

Above all, Manzarate's thoughts highlighted that nursing research is not a pursuit of numbers, but a pursuit for recognizing life experiences, for bringing silenced stories to platform, and for

constructing a future based upon empathy and justice. Her work is a firm call to remember that when we talk about identity, emotion, and advocacy with regard to academic research, we do not mean such things are separate from it, but that they are its foundation.

A Common Thread: Qualitative Research as Reflective, Ethical, and Transformatory Practice

Each of these reflections is independent, yet together they map a consistent quality of nursing research is reflection, ethical engagement, and ongoing transformation. Rivera's "emptying the cup" is reminiscent of Erie's call for reflective practice and of Manzarate's emotional and ethical crystallization throughout the research process.

What united these scholars is an awareness that research is embedded within an individual's life, philosophy, and politics. In addressing one's bias, working with the affective context of caring, or struggling on behalf of equity and dignity for all—these researchers conduct inquiry that is deeply human in terms of depth and complexity.

Implication for Nursing Education and Practice

These are crucial for teaching, guiding, and caring for future generations of nurse researchers. In doing so, they emphasized teaching reflective processes, philosophy of emotions, and emotionality in caring as being integral parts of education for research, alongside technicalities.

And, these stories remind us too that once again the questions guiding us are personal and political simultaneously. The imperatives of knowing and of service in making a difference in our patients' and our people's lives arise from experience and intense moral feeling. By honoring and respecting such frames of questions, certainly, we contribute to nursing discipline research that is meaningful and sound.

In hindsight, the works by Rivera, Erie, and Manzarate illustrated that qualitative methods of research allow deeper consideration of important issues at hand. Stories are more than a personal development construct; stories allow us to think and aspire beyond what is considered within the research process, for empathy within research, and additional thoughtfulness within research methodology.

Qualitative research, which is evidenced by these nurse scholars, calls for intellectual humility, philosophical engagement, emotional listening, and care, that are deeply transformative, about what we know and what we do. They remind us that questioning is caring and caring involves being open to change by laying aside assumptions and being prepared for new information.