

2011

From the Editors

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Recommended Citation

Nelson, Meredith; Emerson, Peter; and Matbery, Mary Emily (2011) "From the Editors," *Louisiana Journal of Counseling*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalscholar.lsuhs.edu/ljc/vol18/iss1/2>

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From *the* Editors

Reflections on Scholarship: Getting Started Doing Research

The Louisiana Journal of Counseling (LJC) has had since its inception the goal of promoting scholarship within the counseling profession in Louisiana. In the quest to encourage counselors to develop their personal scholarship and the scholarship of others, we often encounter as editors a hesitation and sometimes a fear of submitting scholarly manuscripts for publication. Many times that ambiguity of, "What would I write about?" or, "How would I even get started?" along with other self-doubts surface as stumbling blocks to getting started. It is hoped that the suggestions in this article, based largely on previous work of Duba (2001), will answer some of the questions that might be deterring you from considering submissions. Her article elaborates on the four functions of scholarship posed originally by Boyer (1990). The four functions are: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of appreciation, and the scholarship of teaching. The editors hope that by examining these four functions of scholarship the reader will be provided with some useful starting points for their personal research efforts.

Scholarship of Discovery

The first function, the scholarship of discovery, is the quest to seek new knowledge to add to the body of knowledge in counseling. Upon initial reading of this function, adding

something new to all that is already out there can impose a daunting task. However, if the reader goes back to some of the very basic principles of investigation using simple observations (Orcher, 2005), much ambiguity is lifted and starting points for research are clear. Orcher proposed six questions that can be used in many cases individually to conduct less complex research or that can be combined to get more detailed research.

1. *What is the prevalence of the observed behavior?* (p.3)
Investigation almost always begins with the simple question of, "What is currently occurring?" The baseline of behavior or the prevalence of the observed behavior prior to any type of manipulation is the traditional starting point for research. The observation can be substantiated by formal means of recording such as a checklist or other types of pretests. The frequency, intensity, and duration of whatever is being observed are used to establish the baseline or prevalence which may end up being the purpose of the study, or the information may just be a starting point for a more sophisticated technique or intervention to measure effectiveness.
2. *What are the demographics of those who exhibit the behavior?* (p.3)

Observing specific descriptions of the individuals one is observing is essential for other researchers to be able to replicate the work with other populations.

Demographics that are commonly used include: age, gender, race, developmental stage, socioeconomic status, and educational level. Accurate identification of a specific population doing just about any behavior could be the entire study. Accurate demographics also allow for replication of research and experimental design adaptations.

3. *What is the cause of the observed behavior?* (p.3)

Observing and documenting the situations or stimuli that trigger the observed behaviors are a vital part of many studies. Recording observations that can link specific precursors to specific behaviors can be instrumental in the development of studies in preventative work. A study might have the focus of linking cause and effect such as, a driver's aggressive and erratic driving is often related to their feelings of anger. Or the study might use the casual link to expand on other connected topics. Knowing that traffic congestion facilitates anger in some drivers could be used to design preventative measures that deal with initial levels of anger. These could also be the focus of research.

4. *What does the observed behavior cause?* (p4)

Examining the impact, either immediate or long term, is often essential as behaviors or lack of behaviors observed would be far more cost effective to address than what the behavior or lack of

behavior might cause. Recent studies that link childhood inactivity to obesity in children is one of many possible examples. Increasing movement of any kind is a simple inexpensive way that research can answer a devastating health issue.

5. *Is it possible to predict the behavior?* (p4)

All of the preventative models that work, for example teaching social skills and classroom guidance, are predicated upon research of identification of those who are susceptible to inappropriate behaviors. These behaviors can be modified easier than behaviors that are habitual. This type of research often combines the demographics from #2 to identify the best predictors of certain behaviors.

6. *What theory or theories might account for that behavior?* (p4)

The direct application of a theory or the comparison of the effectiveness of two or more theories to explain the behavior is essential to most research. The literature review for almost all research requires documentation from previous theories to help formulate how the new data compares to the existing body of research.

Scholarship of Integration

Achieving the scholarship of integration rests on the ability of the individual to accomplish a two-fold integrative process (Boyer, 1990). This process includes being able to first examine and integrate previous research within the field of counseling. Second, the researcher must be able to integrate the research into the body of research from other mental health professions. This ability becomes quite

evident in the researcher's review of the literature. All manuscripts accepted by this journal (LJC) have included literature reviews that at least accomplished the integration within the field of counseling

Scholarship of Application

The third area of scholarship to be considered is the application. The simple question the researcher can ask to test this is: "Am I using or would I consider using this research to benefit the population that I work with?" One of the criterion we use to review manuscripts for the journal (LJC) is the applicability of the research submitted. "Is it of interest to our readers?" and "Can they apply it to their specific setting?" are critical questions in the decision of manuscript acceptance in the journal.

Scholarship of Teaching

The scholarship of teaching is focused "in the promotion of safe, motivating, and healthy environments in which potential scholars can learn and advance in the field." (Duba, 2001, p.3). In the review process, every attempt is made to provide those who submit manuscripts with positive feedback when changes need to be made. It is to this end that we have tried to address the focus of this article to promote and encourage potential scholars. We have also recently instituted a special graduate student section. Articles in this section will primarily be the work of counseling

graduate students. We encourage all students who have not previously been thinking about submitting research to contact a professor at their school and consider submitting some of their research manuscripts. We also hope that those in agency, private practice and school settings would consider manuscript submissions as well. It is our view that the value of research is inherent in improving and advocating for our clients and the counseling profession as a whole.

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-Peter Emerson and Meredith Nelson

Editors