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Published scholarship on marital therapy--Comment/reply

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Abstract (Abstract): A content analysis of ten prominent marital and family therapy journals during a six-year period is presented. Snyder and Rice comment on the research. Worthing, Shortz, McCullough, Kurusu, Bryant and DeVries respond.

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Full text: Students of marital therapy who wish to remain familiar with trends and developments in marital therapy or who want to communicate their ideas about marital therapy to other professionals face several problems. First, many professional journals potentially include marital therapy in their scope, but it is not clear which of these journals most often publish articles on marital therapy. Second, many authors and institutions contribute articles on marital therapy to professional journals. Those interested in studying marital therapy would benefit from identifying the most prolific authors and institutions in the field of marital therapy. Third, identifying recent trends in the research and practice of marital therapy would yield important information regarding the particular problems and issues with which the field is concerned.

The present article responds to these needs by analyzing marital therapy anicles in 10 prominent marital and family therapy journals. This updates previous analyses of scholarship in the field (i. e., Olson, Russell, &Sprenkle, 1980; Thomas &McKenzie, 1986), but with a focus on marital therapy. METHOD

We reviewed all articles published in 10 selected marital and family therapy journals during a 6-year period from January 1985 through September 1991. Ten journals were identified as among the most influential in the field of marital and family therapy: the American Journal of Family Therapy, Behavior Therapy, Cognitive Therapy and Research, Family Process, Family Therapy, The International Journal of Family Therapy, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Journal of Family Therapy, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, and Psychotherapy. All journals were published continuously during the time period covered, although the International Journal of Family Therapy was renamed Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal in the Spring of 1986. Editorials, book reviews, and letters to the editor were excluded from review. The sample consisted of 3,100 articles that were subject to peer review. Article title and abstract content determined which articles were selected as pertaining to marital therapy. Ultimately, 176 articles (5.7% of all articles) were identified as dealing with marital therapy.

A coding scheme was developed to identify: (a) prolific authors in the field, (b) prominent institutions of research, (c) types of articles written, and (d) where they were published. Judges were two doctoral candidates at a counseling psychology program accredited by the American Psychological Association.

The coding sheet was divided into four parts: part I, demographic variables; part II, type of article [(a) empirical, (b) theoretical exposition, (c) case study, (d) literature review, etc.; articles could be assigned to only one category]; part III, type of empirical article, when rated as such [(a) outcome study, (b) survey, (c) component analysis, (d) client variable, (e) therapist variable, or (f) other; an article could be described by more than one category]; and part IV, theoretical orientation (systemic theories were broken down into six additional categories). Two independent judges read and coded the abstracts with 91% agreement. Differences were resolved by an independent third judge. Cohen's kappa between the two primary judges for part I was .95; for part II, .87; for part III, .97; and for part IV, 1.0. RESULTS

Authorship was weighted so that single authorship equaled 1 point, dual-authorship equaled .5 point, and so forth. As illustrated in Table 1, S. A. Wilcoxon was the most prolific author within the 10 journals with 4.8 full publication equivalents, followed by S. M. Johnson with 4.0 full publication equivalents. (Table 1 omitted.) A separate tally was made of the number of publications on which each author's name appeared. Johnson and Jacobson had their names on the most publications (n = 8); Wilcoxon's name appeared on seven publications (see Table 1 for others).

Table 1 also lists the institutions leading the field in marital therapy research. Institutions were weighted similarly to authors. If all authors were affiliated with the institution, the institution received one point. If half of the authors were affiliated with an institution, it received .5 point, and so forth. The University of Washington produced the most scholarship in the 6-year period with 8.8 full publication equivalents. Institutions were also rated according to the number of publications on which the institutional name appeared. The University of Washington and Brigham Young University appeared on the most publications with nine each. Table 1 also reveals an obvious linkage between certain prolific authors and their institutions. For example, Jacobson is affiliated with the University of Washington, Wilcoxon with the University of Alabama, and Ingram with Texas Tech University. As shown in Table 2, the Journal o fMarital and Family Therapy has published the greatest number of marital therapy articles--25% of all marital therapy articles published from 1985 through 1991. (Table 2 omitted.) The American Journal of Family Therapy published 21.6% of all marital therapy articles in those years. A content analysis of the abstracts (see Table 3) revealed that approximately 50% of the articles were empirical investigations and 66% of the articles were not centered around a theoretical orientation. (Table 3 omitted.) Further content analyses revealed that 34% of the articles focused on complicating factors within the marital dyad, such as alcoholism, a schizophrenic partner, or a raped partner; 20% focused on building intimacy; and 14% pertained to improving communication.

DISCUSSION

Results of this study suggest several clear differences in the number and type of articles related to marital therapy found in the different journals. Although all of the reviewed journals gave at least some attention to marital therapy, some journals published more on marital therapy than did others. Journals differed in their emphasis on empirical and theoretical work. For example, all of the articles on marital therapy that were published in Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Therapy and Research were empirical investigations. Overall, few marital therapy articles were written within a theoretical framework. This suggests that the field of marital therapy may be less theoretically driven than its sibling, family therapy. Our study is limited, though, in that much scholarship on marital therapy is published as books or book chapters and was not, therefore, included in our review.

An interesting finding was that 34% of the articles reviewed dealt with some complicating individual factor within the context of the marital dyad (i.e., an alcoholic, schizophrenic, or depressed partner). Thus, despite the criticism of some that marital therapy ignores the individual(Harper, 1985), here is clear evidence that current scholarship in marital therapy does not ignore the importance of individual issues or their impact on the marriage. In fact, this may indicate a maturing of the field of marital therapy, blending individual and marital perspectives. This apparent loosening of formerly more rigid boundaries between individual and marital perspectives may allow easier integration of the literature on individual disorders with that of systems theories. Clearly, the field of marital therapy is maturing and developing an identity as a distinct discipline, with a variety of scholars at many institutions writing about empirical studies, theory, and techniques. REEERENCES

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Children often teach us the folly of our efforts to count and measure. When restricted to two cookies each, the first author's two older sons scavenge the offerings to consume the largest cookies available regardless of their content--each claiming superiority over the other or joining forces to declare victory over their parents. Because their younger brother's favorite cookie is only one-fourth the standard size, his parents typically permit him five small cookies as his reward. The older children, although fully knowing they've been awarded greater substance, still declare an injustice based on the number of cookies allotted to each. Clearly there is more to counting than meets the eye.

Shortz, Worthington, McCollough, DeVries, and Morrow (1994) surveyed the published journal literature over a 6-year period to identify "prolific authors, insitutions, types of articles...and publication outlets" in an effort to "facilitate future scholarship." We endorse the goals of such a survey and the authors' efforts to rely on objective indices of theoretical and empirical developments in marital therapy. However, similar to parents' dilemma in evaluating the form and substance of resources allotted to their children, we have pondered whether the means by which Shortz et al. have conducted their own analyses of journal articles addressing marital therapy optimally identify recent developments in this field.

More specifically, a review of Shortz et al.'s methods suggests serious limitations to their conclusions based on the authors' failure to consider objective indices of journals' influence, available data regarding authors' impact stemming from articles identified in this study, and an arbitrary method of weighting authorship that potentially results in a bias against empirical, programmatic, or collaborative research.

EVALUATING JOURNALS' INFLUENCE

On which journals should students, practitioners, and researchers of marital therapy focus their attention when evaluating recent theoretical or empirical trends in the field? Do articles in one journal likely exhibit the same conceptual or methodological sophistication as articles in another? Will they likely have the same impact? The 10 journals identified by Shortz et al. as "the most influential in the field of marital and family therapy" vary considerably in this regard. As an alternative to authors' own subjective evaluations of journals' influence--which may vary considerably across members of the discipline or across time (cf. Thomas &McKenzie, 1986)--two more reliable approaches to ranking journals' influence have been identified.

The first approach relies on objective indices of journals' visibility, immediacy, and impact. Visibility may be inferred from a journal's circulation; immediacy and impact are derived from a journal's citation patterns noted in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) published by the Institute for Scientific Information. The SSCI impact index reflects the frequency with which a journal's "average" article has been cited in a given year; journals with higher impact indices have higher rates of citations by others publishing scholarly works in other journals included in the SSCI. By comparison, the SSCI immediacy index measures how quickly the "average" article in a specific journal is cited and can identify journals that are publishing the latest works influencing subsequent scholarly publications.

Table 1 presents impact, immediacy, and circulation data for the 10 journals included in the Shortz et al. review. (Table 1 omitted.) Only 4 of the journals (Journal of Marital and Family Therapy [JMFT], Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology[JCCP], Psychotherapy, and Family Process [FP]) have circulations over 5,000; among these, the average article published in JCCP is twice as likely to be cited in the published literature as the average article published in FP, and three to four times as likely as the average article in JMFT or Psychotherapy. The immediacy ratings for Cognitive Therapy and Research (0.47) and JCCP (0.34) indicate that works published in these 2 journals are likely to have an impact on subsequent scholarly publications sooner than those appearing in the other 8 journals included in the Shortz et al. review. Interestingly, although Shortz et al. note that the American Journal of Family Therapy (AJFT) published 21.6% of all marital therapy articles from 1985 through 1991, data from Table 1 demonstrate that AJFT is among 4 journals in their survey having only limited visibility, immediacy, or impact based on objective indicators (the other 3 being

Contemporary Family Therapy, Family Therapy, and Journal of Family Therapy).

A second approach to evaluating journals' influence on a field would be to survey a sample of "experts" (authors ranked high on objective measures of productivity or impact, consulting editors to journals in the marital or family area, individuals holding "fellow" or "diplomate" status in marital and family therapy related associations) and to have respondents nominate or rank-order the top journals in the discipline. An advantage to group nominations or rankings is that, by surveying a broader sample outside the authors themselves, such ratings are likely to prove more reliable across independent judges of journals' influence. Another advantage is that such ratings may identify relatively recent journals of high quality not yet incorporated in SSCI. For example, the Journal of Family Psychology (JFP)--initially published in 1987 by Sage Publications and since 1992 by the American Psychological Association (APA) as the official journal of APA's Division 43 (Family Psychology)-- has arguably become one of the top five journals for publishing empirical investigations of marital and family therapy.

Howard (1983) adopted a subjective nomination procedure to identify the five top journals in the field of counseling psychology. Although Howard demonstrated that research productivity ratings derived from one journal (the Journal of Counseling Psychology) generalized well to a composite productivity index incorporating data from all five journals in his survey, a quite different result might be obtained in the area of marital and family therapy where authors of one theoretical orientation often publish exclusively in one subset of journals and not another (cf. authors contributing to Behavior Therapy versus Family Process).

EVALUATING AUTHORS' INFLUENCE: PRODUCTIVITY VERSUS IMPACT

In their paper identifying the most "prolific" writers in marital and family therapy, Thomas and McKenzie (1986) distinguished between issues of productivity (the length of an individual's vita) and impact (reflecting both the quality and placement of an individual's scholarly work). Perhaps because they emphasized the former, only one of the 17 individuals on their original list (Jacobson) also appears in Table 1 of Shortz et al. How should we advise students of marital therapy to identify individuals influencing research and practice in the discipline? Commenting on a study of research productivity in psychology, Matson, Gouvier, and Manikam (1989) noted that, "The productivity of an idea is best measured not in terms of how many times an author can get it published, but in terms of how fecund the idea is, as measured by how often it is cited in the writings of others" (p. 737). Table 2 presents cumulative citation data through August 1992 for articles included by Shortz et al. as the basis for their identifying the current seven "prolific" authors in marital therapy." (Table 2 omitted.) The number of citations for each author for these works (excluding self-citations) ranges from 1 (Ingram) to 77 (Jacobson). The Spearman rank-order correlation (corrected for tied ranks) between Shortz et al.'s "Full Publication Equivalents" and citation data in Table 2 is only .18, indicating limited common variance between the two constructs for this sample.(3)

Although various methodologies for incorporating citation data have been proposed (cf. Garfield, 1972; White &White, 1977), even citation data may not adequately reflect individuals' current influence on the field. For example, citation-based rankings may be skewed toward long-established contributors and away from "rising stars" shaping current trends in practice and research. In addition, although a given article may include numerous references, the seminal ideas or methods reflected in that article may have been largely determined by only one or two of these.

Heyduk and Fenigstein (1984) noted that, "...it is quite possible for a person's works to have a significant impact on eminent scholars without those works being among the most frequently cited in the general literature" (p. 559); they proceeded to identify influential works and authors in psychology by surveying 92 "eminent psychologists" identified in an earlier citation-based analysis. Respondents were asked to identify those texts or articles (up to a maximum of 10) which significantly influenced their own work and thought, both past and present. Although Heyduk and Fenigstein's findings favored major theoretical works published early in the discipline's development (e.g., Freud, Lewin, and Hull), a similar approach to sampling and modification of the stimulus item could be used to identify individuals whose work shows the most promise for influencing theoretical developments or advances in research over the next 5 to 10 years.

SELECTION AND WEIGHTING: WHAT AND HOW TO COUNT

Shortz et al. acknowledge the exclusion of books and book chapters in their review. To what extent do nonjournal sources influence the field? Nederhof (1989) analyzed 1,165 items comprising the scholarly productivity for seven departments of psychology in the Netherlands across a 6-year period. Journal articles accounted for only 40% of the output; book chapters accounted for 27%, edited books and monographs for an additional 3%, and research reports or contributions to proceedings for most of the remainder. More importantly, Nederhof demonstrated that, as measured by subsequent citations in the published literature (excluding self-citations), books and chapters produced by members of a given department sometimes obtained higher impact than journal articles produced by the same department.

In addition to excluding books and book chapters, Shortz et al. adopted a method of weighting authorship (for both individuals and institutions) that considered number of contributors but ignored ordinal position. An alternative method for weighting multiply authored works is provided by Howard, Cole, and Maxwell (1987): Credit - (1.5 sup n-i)/(characters omitted.)

where n is the total number of authors and i is the particular author's ordinal position. Thus, applying Howard et al.'s method to an article with three authors, the first author would receive a credit value of .47, the second author .32, and the third author .21 rather than the .33 credit each would receive by Shortz et al.'s method. In the absence of actual citation data, an author's likely impact could be estimated by weighting authorship credit for a given work by that journal's SSCI impact index and summing across publications identified for that individual. Without such considerations, the first author of two marital therapy outcome studies with three authors each, published in a journal having high visibility and impact (e. g., JCCP, JMFT, or FP), would be (inappropriately) considered by Shortz et al.'s method to have less influence on the field than the sole author of a case study published in a journal of limited impact.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies of scholarly publications and citations in marital and family therapy can facilitate future scholarship by directing students, practitioners, and researchers to theoretical and empirical developments influencing current science and practice. Sophisticated methodologies exist for identifying those sources bearing the greatest influence on a discipline, including both objective and subjective measures of impact. To the extent that a discipline matures by building on earlier developments, systematic identification of valued efforts can reduce unproductive stumbling and promote more productive strides toward enriching our empirical and clinical heritage.

IS THERE MORE TO COUNTING THAN WHAT MEETS THE EYE? COMMENT ON SNYDER AND RICE Snyder and Rice (1994) argue that the method used by Shortz, Worthington, McCullough, DeVries, and Morrow (1994) to identify prolific authors, institutions, and publication outlets in the field of marital therapy "suggests serious limitations to their conclusions" (p. 191). Snyder and Rice (1994) offer other "sophisticated methodologies...for identifying those sources bearing the greatest influence on a discipline" (p. 195). They offer helpful suggestions to identify influential sources within a field, and we commend them for their suggestions. The present article addresses the question, do these alternative sophisticated methodologies really change our conclusions?

Competing views exist concerning the best methods for measuring individuals', institutions', and journals' contributions to the development of a field. The most commonly preferred methods include the number of journal articles attributed to an author or institution (Horan, Hanish, Keen, Saberi, &Hird, 1993; Howard, 1983; Thomas &McKenzie, 1986), the number of citations for an author or institution (Heyduk &Fenigstein, 1984; Matson, Gauvier, &Manakam, 1989), or a combination of both articles published and number of author citations (Howard &Curtin, 1993). These methods differ in their focus. Number of articles published is a measure of

productivity; number of citations is a measure of impact. The focus on productivity rather than impact yields differences in interpretation.

We argue that (a) we focused on productivity and used adequate methods to measure it and (b) even if we had followed Snyder and Rice's suggestions (which were more concerned with impact), our conclusions would be virtually unchanged from the original article. These sophisticated methodologies do not yield dramatically different conclusions about recent developments of a field.

EVALUATING JOURNALS' INFLUENCE

Snyder and Rice (1994) criticize Shortz et al. (1994) for (a) selecting 10 journals (based on the authors' collective experience) that were likely to publish scholarship on marital therapy between 1985 and 1991 and (b) treating publications in each journal equally. Snyder and Rice propose two criteria for ranking the differential influence of a journal: (a) the visibility of the journal (based on the journal's circulation) and (b) the immediacy and impact (calculated from citation data presented in the Social Sciences Citation Index [SCCr]). These approaches are problematic in that the estimates are based on all journals being read by all social scientists (especially psychologists). The focus of our original investigation (Shortz et al., 1994) was limited to scholars of marital therapy scholarship, not outlets for all types of psychological scholarship. The visibility, immediacy, and impact ratings provided by Snyder and Rice (1994) are more appropriate for evaluating the influence of psychological journals in general, not journals with a focus on marital therapy.

Snyder and Rice (1994) also suggested that we should have surveyed experts in the field of marital therapy to obtain the most prominent journals in the discipline, an approach recommended by Howard (1983). We followed through on Snyder and Rice's (1994) suggestion. We randomly selected 112 experts from the editorial boards of 16 journals often publishing articles in marital and family therapy. We mailed 112 questionnaires asking experts (a) to nominate the most prominent journals in the field of marital therapy, (b) to indicate the journals to which they most often submit their work, and (c) to rank these journals based on the journal's prominence within the field of marital therapy. (The questionnaire is available upon request). One follow-up mailing was made. Our return rate was 49% (N=55), with 31% (n=17) of the experts who responded disqualifying themselves as experts on marital therapy. (Several journals did not specialize in marital and family scholarship. A total of 38 experts provided nominations and ranking).

Results from the three questions indicated that the 5 journals that were considered to be the most prominent in marital therapy, and the journals to which researchers most often submitted their work in marital therapy were Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, Family Process, Journal of Family Psychology, Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, and American Journal of Family Therapy (see Table 1). Of the top 10 journals, 3 were not in circulation throughout the time period of our original investigation and were therefore excluded from our analysis (Journal of Family Psychology, Journal of Family Psychotherapy, and Journal of Couples Therapy). Excluding these 3 journals, only 1 of the top 10 was not among our original list of 10 journals (Family Relations). This suggested that little difference was made by going through the time-consuming surveys with experts nominating and rank-ordering journals.

Snyder and Rice (1994) suggest that an author's influence is better measured by impact, in terms of number of citations received by the author, than by productivity, measured by the number of the author's publications. However, as Snyder and Rice (1994) point out, citation data are biased against "rising stars" and tend to favor established scholars. Snyder and Rice did not mention that citations tend to overrepresent articles reporting scale development, trendy issues, and epidemiological information (Horan et al., 1993; Howard &Curtin, 1993). In addition, citations include many self-citations (which cannot be easily purged) as well as citations by advisees and colleagues. These practices obscure an author's true impact on the field.

The intent of our original paper was to direct individuals interested in the field of marital therapy toward scholars who are currently producing scholarship in the field. We did not intend to identify prominent scholars who have

had a great impact on the field in the past, but who are no longer actively producing scholarship. Our focus was productivity, not impact. Therefore, citation data do not provide the best way to measure our research question. Snyder and Rice (1994) also criticized our Full Publication Equivalents as a way of assigning authorship credit. They calculated a Spearman rank-order correlation of .18 between Shortz et al.'s (1994) Full Publication Equivalents and number of citations from SSCI through August 1992 for articles used by Shortz et al. to identify prolific authors. They chose only the top 7 authors of the over 100 authors in our complete list, which presents a restricted range problem. In general, when we examined the full distribution, we found that the overall sample of authors was highly skewed. The vast majority (76%) of the authors in the list received one Full Publication Equivalent or less. Furthermore, 97% received less than two Full Publication Equivalents. The 7 authors used by Snyder and Rice were at the high end of the sample and do not represent the sample.

SELECTION AND WEIGHTING: WHAT AND HOW TO COUNT

Snyder and Rice (1994) criticize Shortz et al. (1994) for omitting book chapters from their analysis. We omitted chapters for three reasons. First, chapters report empirical research much more infrequently than do journals. Chapters clearly provide a large share of influential scholarly works within the field of marital therapy, but they systematically exclude most empirical research. Second, chapters depend more on personal contacts than do journal articles and are less often refereed. Chapters thus tend to measure impact more than productivity because they generally require authors to be well-known before they are invited to write a chapter. Finally, and most importantly, including chapters would not have achieved our purpose. We wanted to identify scholars and publication outlets to help students and professionals identify prolific authors and institutions and the most likely outlets for their own scholarship on marital therapy. Including book chapters (or books, for that matter) would not have contributed to that purpose, given that most chapters are invited.

Snyder and Rice (1994) adduce the importance of books and chapters by citing Nederhof's (1989) analysis of productivity of psychologists from the Netherlands. This citation has limited relevance to the argument since it examines psychologists, not marriage and family specialists, and defines "research productivity" by a different criterion than is commonly used in the United States. For example, 30% of the reported productivity for the Netherlands' psychologists was in "research reports and contributions to proceedings," which often (perhaps usually) are not counted as published works in the United States.

Snyder and Rice (1994) also argue that Shortz et al.'s (1994) method for weighting authorship that ignores ordinal position is less accurate than Howard, Cole, and Maxwell's (1987) method for weighting multiply authored works. Technically, this is true. All authors were weighted equally. We did not consider ordinal position in our weighting system because ordinal position of authorship is not determined in a universal manner on all multiply authored works. The first author might be the one who provided the seminal idea for the work, the one who wrote the manuscript, the scholar with the most established career regardless of amount of contribution, or a student doing a thesis as part of an established scholar's research program. Who is considered to have made the greatest contribution?

We decided to recalculate authorship weight using Howard et al.'s (1987) method (which takes ordinal position into account) to see the extent of the difference between the two methods. As shown in Table 2, there were slight differences in overall credit, but the overall ranking of the authors did not appreciably change. Wilcoxon moved from first to second and Johnson moved from second to first on our list of most prolific authors. It seems, then, that both methods are accurate for determining authorship.

CONCLUSIONS

Future scholarship within the field of marital therapy can be facilitated by knowledge of prominent individuals, institutions, and journals within the field. As illustrated by Snyder and Rice, various methods exist for identifying these influential sources. Some methods are more appropriate for measuring productivity, whereas others are more appropriate for measuring impact. Our aim was to identify productive scholars, institutions, and journals within the field. Snyder and Rice (1994) focused more on scholarly impact and provided valuable methods for

evaluating impact.

The additional analyses conducted on our original data suggest that our methods were successful at accomplishing our goal and that (even ignoring the differences between productivity and impact) some of Snyder and Rice's (1994) suggestions made only minor differences in results while requiring substantially more effort. Scholars attempting to study questions such as those addressed in our original paper, Snyder and Rice's response, and our reply need to select, from the variety available, those methods most appropriate for achieving their purposes.

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NOTES

1. The authors are indebted to Joianne L. Shortz and her co-authors for graciously providing their list of publications comprising the basis for their productivity rankings.

2. We included citation data for Snyder, Wills, and Grady-Fletcher (1991) which appeared in the time period covered by Shortz et al. but was overlooked in their review.

3. By contrast, the Spearman rank-order correlation (corrected for tied ranks) between the number of articles authored or co-authored (also presented by Shortz et al.) and citation data in Table 2 is .71. REFERENCES

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