

## RESEARCH NOTE

# ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL ARTICLE AUTHORS, 2004–2008

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The researchers tabulated the academic affiliations of the authors of all articles published between 2004 and 2008 in 6 major social work journals to produce a ranking of the colleges and universities whose faculty made the most substantive contributions to the social work literature. The results of this analysis are compared with findings of 5 identical, previously published studies, which cover the 5-year periods of 1979–1983, 1984–1988, 1989–1993, 1994–1998, and 1999–2003. The limitations of this method of analysis are discussed, as are its merits.

AS NOTED BY GARFIELD (1972), researchers have measured scholarly productivity through authorship and citations in scholarly journals since at least 1927. The data obtained from these analyses often lead to rankings, which have been published across a wide range of disciplines and fields, including multicultural psychology (Lau, Cisco, & Delgado-Romero, 2008), behavior analysis (Shabani, Carr, Petursdottir, Esch, & Gillett, 2004), literacy (Morrison & Wilcox, 2008), school psychology (Carroll, Skinner, McCleary, von Mizener, & Bliss, 2009), community psychology (Jason,

Pokorny, Patka, Adams, & Morello, 2007), criminal justice (Sorensen & Pilgrim, 2002), science education (Barrow, Settlege, & Germann, 2008), psychology (Mahoney, Buboltz, Calvert, & Hoffman, 2010), higher education (Rachal, Shelley, & David, 2008), logistics (Carter, Vellenga, Gentry, & Allen, 2005), conservation biology (Grant, Olden, Lawler, Nelson, & Silliman, 2007), rehabilitation psychology (West, Armstrong, & Ryan, 2005), and social work in both the United States (Ligon, Jackson, & Thyer, 2007) and the United Kingdom (Shardlow & Harlow, 2010).

An overview of reasons for these studies and the various approaches that have been used is available elsewhere (Kirk, Kil, & Corcoran, 2009). The present study replicates the methodology used in five identical previous studies that investigated publications for the periods 1979–1983 (Thyer & Bentley, 1986), 1984–1988 (Thyer, Boynton, Bennis, & Levine, 1994), 1989–1993 (Ligon, Thyer, & Dixon, 1995), 1994–1998 (Ligon & Thyer, 2001), and 1999–2003 (Ligon, Jackson, & Thyer, 2007) to rank the productivity of academic institutions based on author affiliations for the period 2004–2008.

## Procedure

### Sample of Journals

Consistent with the methodology used in the four previous studies, we summarized the academic affiliations for all authors of every article published during the years 2004–2008 in six social work journals: *Journal of Social Service Research*, *Social Work*, *Social Service Review*, *Journal of Social Work Education*, *Child Welfare*, and *Families in Society*.

### Tabulation of Authorships

As in the previous studies, we counted each author of multiauthored articles in the tabulation. For example, if two authors, one from University A and another from University B, wrote an article, both universities A and B would receive credit for one publication (as opposed to one-half credit). If two or more institutions had the same number of authors credited to it, we scored the institutions as tied. For example, both the University of Texas at Austin and the University of

Washington were credited with 36 authorships during this 5-year period (see Table 1). Therefore, we tabulated them both as tied for 7th place. This practice is consistent with the five previous publications in this series of studies.

## Results

Table 1 provides a ranked listing for all institutions having three or more citations during this 5-year period. Institutions in shared rank categories are arranged alphabetically, and a complete listing for all institutions tabulated is available from the authors. From 1979 to 2008, four institutions have been ranked in the top 10 for every study period. These include Columbia University, the University of Michigan, the University of Washington, and Washington University. In addition, Virginia Commonwealth University has appeared in the top 10 for the most recent five rankings (1984–2008).

## Discussion

The results of this study, like the previous five investigations, must be viewed with caution, and there are a number of specific concerns to consider, which were reinforced in the previous studies. Although the use of six identical journals for each 5-year period provides consistency in the data, these six journals cannot be said to adequately capture the overall scholarly activity of social work authors and their academic institutions. However, it may be credibly argued that the six are among the traditional core journals in social work.

Second, the failure of these social work journals to consistently list the departmental affiliation of every author remains a problem.



**TABLE 1. Colleges and Universities Ranked by the Publication Productivity of Their Faculties in Six Major Social Work Journals, 2004–2008**

Rank	Academic Institution	Number of Citations
1	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	58
2	Virginia Commonwealth University	56
3	University of Maryland, Baltimore	48
4	Washington University	46
5	University of Toronto	42
6	Columbia University	39
7	University of Texas at Austin	36
	University of Washington	
8	University of California, Berkeley	34
9	University of Chicago	
	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	
	University of Wisconsin-Madison	
10	Boston University	30
	University of Michigan	
11	University of Kansas	29
12	Arizona State University	
13	Florida State University	27
	University of Tennessee	
14	Boston College	26
	Case Western Reserve University	
15	University of California, Los Angeles	25
	Ohio State University	
16	State University of New York at Albany	24
	University of Minnesota	
	Rutgers University	
17	University of Houston	22
18	University of Pennsylvania	21
	University of Pittsburgh	
19	Tel Aviv University	19
20	University of Illinois, Chicago	18
21	Arizona State University-Phoenix	17
22	Fordham University	15
23	University of Kentucky	14
	Portland State University	

*Continued*

TABLE 1. Cont.

Rank	Academic Institution	Number of Citations
23 (cont.)	San Diego State University	13
	University of South Florida	
24	Ben-Gurion University	13
	Hebrew University	
25	Duke University	12
	Indiana University	
	University of Iowa, Iowa City	12
	Michigan State University	
	New York University	12
	University of Southern California	
26	Bar-Ilan University	11
	University of South Carolina-Columbia	
27	University of Haifa	10
	Louisiana State University	
	Loyola University Chicago	10
	Smith College	
	University of Utah	10
	Yeshiva University	
28	Adelphi University	9
	Arizona State University at the West Campus	
	Brigham Young University	9
	Bryn Mawr College	
	University of Hawaii	9
	Temple University	
	University of Texas at Arlington	9
	Yale University	
29	University of Calgary	8
	Florida International University	
	University of Georgia	8
	University of Missouri-Columbia	
	University of Nevada, Las Vegas	8
	Saint Louis University	
30	University of Alabama	7
	University of Arkansas	
	University of California, Davis	7

Continued

TABLE 1. Cont.

Rank	Academic Institution	Number of Citations
30 (cont.)	Catholic University of America University of Connecticut Deakin University University of Denver North Carolina State University Rhode Island College Urban Institute	
31	University of British Columbia University of California Davis Medical Center University of Central Florida The Chinese University of Hong Kong Eastern Washington University George Mason University Hunter College University of North Carolina at Charlotte University of North Carolina at Greensboro Texas Christian University Texas State University Tulane University	6
32	Auburn University Brigham University Colorado State University DePaul University University of Hawaii at Manoa Illinois State University University of North Carolina at Wilmington University of Oklahoma Pennsylvania State University University of Texas at San Antonio Widener University	5
33	University of Alabama at Birmingham University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa University of Buffalo, State University of New York California Institute for Mental Health California State University, Bakersfield	4

Continued

TABLE 1. Cont.

Rank	Academic Institution	Number of Citations
33 (cont.)	California State University, Los Angeles	3
	University of California, San Francisco	
	Charles Sturt University	
	University of Colorado, Denver	
	Georgia State University	
	University of Groningen	
	University of Hong Kong	
	Laval University	
	University of Maryland, College Park	
	McMaster University	
	Memorial University of Newfoundland	
	Mount Sinai School of Medicine	
	National University of Singapore	
	University of Nebraska at Omaha	
	University of New Hampshire	
	Northwestern University	
	San Jose State University	
	Simmons College	
	Syracuse University	
	Wayne State University	
	Western Michigan University	
	West Virginia University	
	Wright State University	
34	Baylor University	3
	Carleton University	
	California State University, Fresno	
	University of Cincinnati	
	Dalhousie University	
	University of the Fraser Valley	
	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis	
	James Cook University	
	La Trobe University	
	University of Louisville	
	University of Maryland, Baltimore County	
	University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester	

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Indeed, many university-based authors of social work articles are not associated with schools of social work, and our rankings represent the combined scholarly contributions derived from all departments and schools within the respective college or university.

Third, social workers, as in other disciplines, often publish in non-social work journals, with one study noting that this was the case in 40% of the 1,349 articles the researchers analyzed (Green, Baskind, & Conklin, 1995). Some researchers contend that the likelihood of social workers publishing their work in non-social work journals may even be increasing and that the proportion of non-social work publications increases with the academic reputation of the larger university (see Green & Secret, 1996).

Fourth, there has been previous criticism of these rankings in which “researchers nar-

cissistically focus on themselves” (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 1998, p. 209), and some authors have debated whether such studies should be published at all (Kreuger, 1993; Meinert, 1993). However, Kirk and Corcoran (1995) noted the importance of recognizing top performers and stated that “the social work profession would be immeasurably weakened without them” (p. 414).

Fifth, Pincus, Henderson, Blackwood, and Dial (1993), addressing related ranking studies in the field of psychiatry, noted that productivity ratings capture aspects of the quantity but not necessarily the quality of academic scholarship. Although we would like to believe that all articles appearing in these six core journals reflect high-quality scholarship, we would be naive to do so. Sims and McGhee identified inherent difficulties in trying to quantify an essentially intangible concept: the

TABLE 1. Cont.

Rank	Academic Institution	Number of Citations
34 (cont.)	McGill University	
	Montclair State University	
	University of Newcastle	
	University of North Dakota	
	Robert Wood Johnson Medical School	
	University of Southampton	
	Stephen F. Austin State University	
	Tampere University Hospital	
	Tufts University	
	Wake Forest University	
	University of Washington Tacoma	
	Western Kentucky University	
	West Chester University	
	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	

relative quality and importance of research (2003, p. 22). Thus, a high ranking in a study such as ours does not necessarily correspond with the greatest qualitative contributions to scholarly discourse.

Sixth, journal articles are not the sole means of contributing to social work scholarship. Books, chapters, conference presentations, and contributions to mass media are other useful ways to disseminate knowledge. Journals, however, possess certain unique aspects, which set them both apart and above related venues, including blind peer review, feedback to authors, and the opportunity to revise (and improve) one's work.

Although rankings such as these are but one way to view academic institutions, they have been used over a long period of time and are likely to continue in the future. Certainly the debate about rankings is not limited to the analyses of journal articles, their authors, and academic affiliations. *U.S. News & World*

*Report* has published institutional and departmental rankings of colleges and universities annually since 1983. These rankings are often included on institutional websites and in promotional materials for college and universities. However, a critique of medical school rankings in *U.S. News & World Report* was deemed "worthless on methodologic and conceptual grounds" (McGaghie & Thompson, 2001, p. 990). Indeed, that same year, *U.S. News & World Report* noted in one of the magazine's rankings of graduate programs, "While the value of rankings will always be a topic for lively debate, we believe they can inform your thinking. They don't just hand you an easy answer" ("Making sense," 2001, p. 65). Similarly, these five studies may not provide answers, but they do offer one consistent, evidence-based, longitudinal view of the institutional trends in six core journals covering over a quarter century of scholarship in social work.

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