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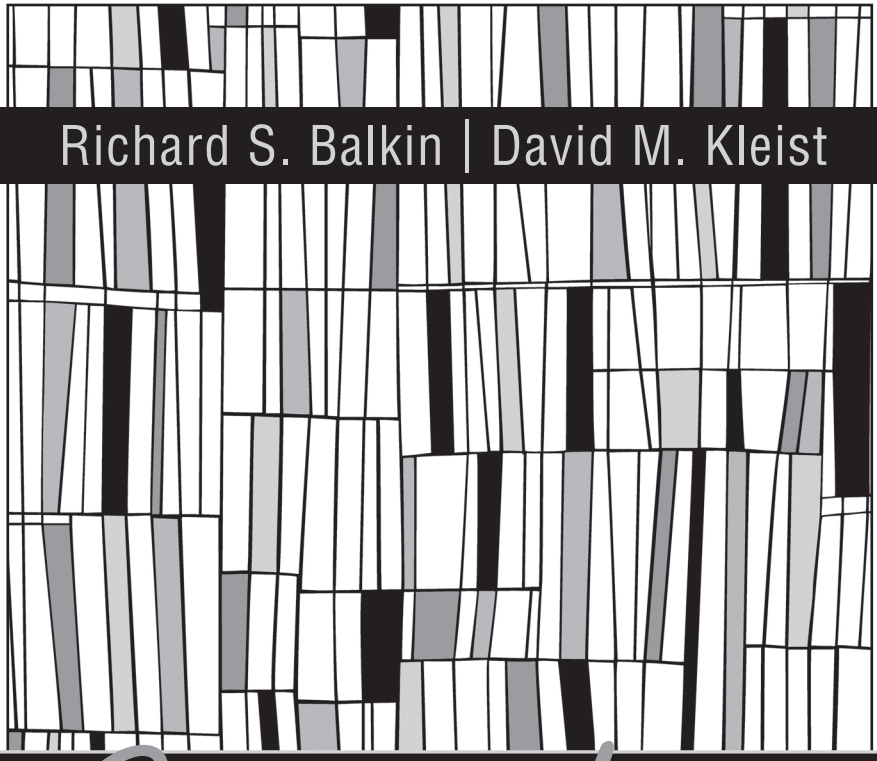

Counseling RESEARCH

A Practitioner-Scholar Approach

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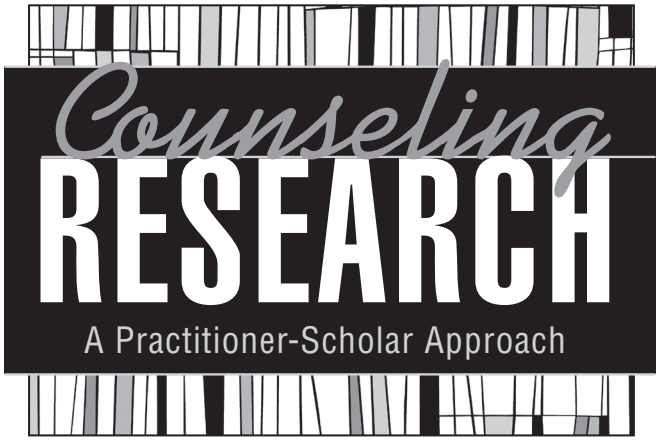

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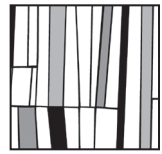

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Preface

Most of the counseling graduate students I (Rick) know do not wake up in the morning thinking, "Hot damn, I get to go to my research class today!" Rather, most of the students I have had in my research course come to class, at least in the beginning, with a lot of anxiety, much of which centers around discomfort with math. Honestly, I am not any different from the majority of counseling graduate students who have had this experience. When I was a graduate student, I walked into my research classes similar to most graduate students in counseling. I was anxious and felt unprepared. My experience with math was tumultuous at best. Much of counseling research is dependent on statistics, but I want to emphasize to you that research is not a computational nightmare but rather a process with logical steps to enhance our knowledge of the counseling profession. In fact, the math is not too difficult, as all we do is add, subtract, multiply, divide, and square root. So relax! The math is not really the main part. Focus on the process.

Of course, counseling research is not solely dependent on quantitative methods. I asked David M. Kleist to join me as a coauthor given his expertise in qualitative research as well as successful collaborations I have had with David in the past. You will find in this book a strong overview of qualitative research and common approaches used in counseling research that inform practice. Counselors make great qualitative researchers because of the natural fit of hearing our clients' narratives and to establishing meaning from them. These same skills can be used in developing meaningful counseling research.

The language used to describe research methods is technical, and both David and I attempt to reduce the confusion by using a conversational tone in this text. There will be times when the material may seem a little dry, but I think this book excels in providing research examples specific to counseling and bridging the technicalities of research and the realities of practice. Ultimately research is a useless exercise if it is not utilized to enhance the counseling practice.

In this book we strive to address two audiences: the counselor-in-training and the emerging researcher. If you are just being introduced to research in counseling, you will find this book helpful in providing an understanding of the primary methods of research used in the counseling profession. However, we also attempt to provide a bridge to individuals who have an understanding of research and wish to apply concepts to design studies. Hence, we feel this book will be useful to the master's student just beginning to understand research as well as to those considering topics for a thesis, dissertation, or the development of an initial study. To accommodate this broad audience, we include sections on research designs, respective to the content covered, near the end of each chapter. To assist with synthesizing and applying the content of each chapter, we provide a "Suggested Activities" section at the end of each chapter.

The text is divided into four parts. Part I, "The Essence of Research in the Counseling Profession," provides an overview of the practitioner-scholar model (Chapter 1), which informs the content of and approach to this text and emphasizes the connection between counseling practice and research. An introduction to the research process is presented in Chapter 2, addressing the choice of a research topic, review of the literature, and data collection and analysis. An emphasis on multicultural counseling and issues of diversity is essential to counseling, and the research process is no exception. We thus highlight research ethics and multicultural issues in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 includes an overview of the types of research that are delineated further in future chapters.

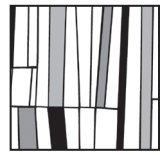
Part II, "Quantitative Research Designs," provides detailed descriptions of experimental (Chapters 5, 7, and 8) and correlational (Chapter 6) research. Meta-analysis is covered in Chapter 9 to provide an understanding of a genre of quantitative research that is especially important in identifying empirically supported treatments. Single-case research design is discussed in Chapter 8; this can be an important method for counseling researchers and

practitioners who wish to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention or treatment but do not have access to large numbers of potential participants.

Part III, "Qualitative Research Designs," provides an understanding of qualitative research. Chapter 10 posits key philosophies, concepts, and ideas about qualitative research and the development and design of qualitative studies. Chapter 11 provides an understanding of preeminent theories of qualitative inquiry and how they connect to the purpose, design, and analysis of qualitative research.

Part IV, "Practice-Based Research," is concerned with the development of measures that may be used for research and evaluation and for conducting program evaluations. Measurement is an essential component of research, and both practitioners and researchers often use measures to demonstrate efficacy and accountability. Program evaluation provides a connection between research and practice, and the process of program evaluation may incorporate elements of the various methods discussed throughout the text.

Throughout the text we emphasize practical research examples relevant to counseling practice and highlight opportunities to reflect on these examples in the "Suggested Activities" sections. Regardless of the extent of your training, we hope you will appreciate the importance of being a consumer of research—that when you join the American Counseling Association, you also benefit from the flagship journal *Journal of Counseling & Development,* division journals, and the multitude of resources this organization offers to advance the counseling profession. We hope that after reading this primer on research design, emerging researchers will be able to pursue further research studies and advanced coursework feeling well informed about the research process.



Acknowledgments

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I (David) thank Rick for your patience with my process and belief in my ability to contribute to the book. I also thank my wife Jill and son Nathan, who seem to only see me sitting around the house with my laptop, and my daughter Mattie, whose own perseverance motivates me. Finally, I thank all of the doctoral students at Idaho State University who have expanded the envelope of qualitative research's relevance to the counseling profession.

We both wish to express our appreciation to Carolyn Baker, the staff at the American Counseling Association, and the individuals who reviewed this text.

About the Authors

Richard S. Balkin, PhD, is a professor and doctoral program coordinator at the University of Louisville. He is editor of the *Journal of Counseling & Development,* the flagship journal of the American Counseling Association (ACA), and past-president of the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling. His primary research interests include counseling outcomes, research methods, counseling adolescents, and cultural differences in counseling. He is a past recipient of the ACA Best Practices Research Award and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Counseling Vision and Innovation Award.

Rick has published more than 65 peer-reviewed manuscripts, books, and book chapters, the majority quantitative in nature. He is the author of *The Theory and Practice of Assessment in Counseling* (Pearson, 2014) and has authored book chapters on research methods as well as several journal articles related to research methods. Rick is a professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development at the University of Louisville and a Fellow of ACA.

David M. Kleist, PhD, is a professor and chair of the Department of Counseling at Idaho State University. He is presently on the editorial board of *The Qualitative Report* and has held past editorial positions with *Counseling and Values* and *The Family Journal.* He has chaired more than 15 qualitative dissertations in his more than 20 years at Idaho State University. He is a past-president of ACES and has been honored with the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors Mentoring Award. He has

twice been selected as a Master Teacher at Idaho State University. His primary research interests include qualitative research methods, triadic supervision, and reflective processes in counselor education and supervision.

About the Contributors

A. Stephen Lenz, PhD, is an assistant professor of counselor education at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. Dr. Lenz has worked with children, adolescents, adults, and families as a licensed professional counselor in community-based, university, and private practice counseling settings. He is a specialist in the treatment of trauma and use of positive psychology interventions. His research interests include community-based program evaluation, counseling outcome research, the development and translation of psychological assessments, and meta-analysis.

Michael J. Walsh, PhD, is an assistant professor of neuropsychiatry and behavioral science in the University of South Carolina's Rehabilitation Counseling program (RCP). A graduate of the RCP, Mike began his career as a counselor with the South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. He then transitioned to Mental Health America–Beaufort/Jasper as the executive director and clinical supervisor for the small nonprofit mental health agency. Mike has been with the RCP as a full-time faculty member since 2009. In addition to working as a professor, Mike has been active in the national counseling arena, having served two terms as president of the Association for Humanistic Counseling and one term as a member of the American Counseling Association's Governing Council. Mike also served on the American Counseling Association's Ethics Committee (2010–2013 and 2015 to the present) and as cochair of that committee in 2011. In addition to working as a counselor educator, Mike is active in the field, providing consulting and training to various mental

health and vocational agencies. Since 2013, Mike has provided statewide counseling skills training to more than 450 vocational rehabilitation counselors used by the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, and he continues to provide this training to newly hired vocational rehabilitation counselors. Mike also maintains active ties to the psychiatric rehabilitation community and provides consulting services to a mental health agency specializing in helping people with psychiatric disabilities move through the recovery process.