

Several important topics are raised by articles in this issue. They relate to the value and impact of research conducted in our field. Wolf and Riddick, for example, conducted a study of the impact of a widely discussed leisure counseling (LC) program. They ask the too often ignored question: does the program do what it is supposed to do? Several things are important about the study. First, is it conducted under real conditions, under constraints that are typical of most field settings. Thus, generalization is probably high but so is the potential impact of a number of confounding variables or noise. Alternative explanations for the study outcomes are possible. "Noise" makes it difficult to know what really happened.

Second, the authors report negative results. In this case leisure counseling did not significantly improve the leisure attitude or self esteem of the group receiving the program as opposed to the group not receiving the program. Does this mean LC doesn't work? Maybe, maybe not. The bottom line to the authors' efforts is inconclusive. Why then report the results? This type of study needs airing because it reveals the problems and pitfalls inherent in non-laboratory, imperfectly controlled research studies. In our field, "perfect" conditions will be hard to attain. Thus, we do our best under less than ideal circumstances. The study should encourage more of us to study the impact of what we do, albeit under less than perfect conditions. Reporting of these results will add to our knowledge despite their failure to support our sacred-cows.

Bullock, McGuire and Barck's article discusses practitioners' perceptions of needed research areas as well as perceived barriers to undertaking research. Some of the results point to the lack of time that practitioners feel they have to undertake research as well as their perceived lack of skills. These perceptions have usually resulted in research being seen as the territory of academics and a plea that studies be reported in a way that "even a practitioner" could understand them. We will never be a full fledged profession without a body of knowledge and practitioners who are capable of understanding its content. All of us are responsible for bridging the gap, which at times seems like a gulf. As you read the articles in this and other issues of TRJ, don't dismiss the material as just an academic search for tenure. Dig deep, think, ask questions, search for the application. Every tidbit helps. Growth and knowledge is a process of slow accumulation of ideas and information, and professional insight. Happy Hunting.

Peter A. Witt, Editor
Therapeutic Recreation Journal