

# Running head: scholar-practitioner model

Psychology, Psychotherapy



Running Head: Scholar-Practitioner Model The Merits of the Scholar-Practitioner Model Travett R. Johnson Capella University PSY 8002 703 Westpoint Dr. Rosharon, TX 77583 (281) 369-2621 irtravett@msn. com Dr. Jef Feldman The journey to fulfill the requirements to become a psychologist must first begin with the decision to enroll into and successfully complete graduate learning. As a learner, there are many challenges and decisions that one must face to ensure that the journey is beneficial. Progression in this journey requires a clear understanding of the merits of the scholar, practitioner, scholar-practitioner, and practitioner-scholar models. The distinction of these terms must first begin with the definition of each. A scholar is a learned person (especially in the humanities); someone who by long study has gained mastery in one or more disciplines (Webster, 1966). Always the pupil, by definition, this learner can sometimes be seen as a specialist in a given branch of knowledge. By way of contrast, a practitioner is one who practices something, especially an occupation, profession or technique (Webster, 1966). Also known as a clinician, a practitioner, usually of medicine or psychology, does clinical work instead of laboratory experiments. Historically, the first national training conference on clinical psychology was held in 1949 in Boulder, Colorado, and as a result the Boulder model was founded. This model focuses on the scholar-practitioner in which clinical psychologists identify primarily as scientists who apply clinical psychological science to the context of practice with a large emphasis on research (Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998). The goal of the training, educational model, and eventual practice, is for clinicians to use scientific methodology in their practice-decision; to work with clients using

scientifically valid methods, tools, and techniques; to inform their clients of scientifically based findings and approaches to their problems; and to conduct practice-based research (Soldz, 1999). The Boulder Model is typically contrasted with the Vail model which was first introduced in Vail, Colorado in 1973 (Korchin, 1973). This practitioner-scholar model, and the associated Psy. D. degree, were recognized by the American Psychological Association at the Conference on Levels and Patterns of Professional Training in Psychology (The Vail Conference). The Vail Model or practitioner-scholar model emphasizes clinical practice in training. Graduates of both training models are eligible for licensure in all states (licensing exams and renewal requirements are the same for both degrees). Based on the above information, this author surmises that she is currently warring with the mindset of a practitioner, while pursuing the path of a scholar. Having successfully obtained the master's in Counseling Psychology and focusing all attention on working with individual clients, the shift must now be geared toward research. In the master's program, the learning emphasis is on case study evaluations, either through working with groups or individual clients. Diagnosing and assessing clients for treatment plans is the general focus which will catapult the learner into a mindset for clinical practice. The focus for the practitioner is geared toward the study of various theories, behavioral statistics, and assessments. Successfully preparing to make the shift in thinking, this learner must embrace the value of research. The goal of doctoral training is for the learner to utilize an educational model, incorporating scientific methodology in practice-decisions; to work with clients using scientifically valid methods, tools, and techniques; to inform the

clients of scientifically based findings and approaches to their problems; and to conduct practice-based research (Hayes, et al, 1999). As a licensed professional counselor, to successfully transition to doctoral learning, my personal goal will be to take client-centered treatment, using psychodynamics and psychoanalysis and apply research that has been proven. According to Lilach Sagiv (2007), the ability to translate knowledge into psychological interventions will be formulated from the three domains of purpose (what the final goal is), perspective (what underlying beliefs and values the practitioner and the client bring with them), and process (which should fit both the purpose and the perspective). No matter the label, whether scholar-practitioner or practitioner-scholar, excellence requires that I always place myself in the role of a learner. To better serve my clients, the community, and even my peers, I must always stay abreast of new technologies, discoveries, research and advancement on well proven theories. In conclusion, although I favor the role of practitioner versus scientist, it is my belief that one cannot effectively enter into practice without integrating research. This research must be understood and referred to mentally where applicable to bring the best to our clients. The combination of the two areas should only enhance my career. In actively combining the two fields, I feel like then and only then can I consider myself a professional. References Hayes, Steven C., Barlow, David H., & Nelson-Gray, Rosemary O (1999). *The Scientist Practitioner Research and Accountability in the Age of Managed Care* (Second Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 438pp. Korchin, M., (Ed). (1973). *Levels and patterns of professional training psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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