

Preparing Manuscripts With Central and Salient Humanistic Content

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One of my greatest joys as an editor comes from facilitating the development of a manuscript from its initial submission, through one or more revisions, until ultimately it is ready for publication. Each time I begin to read a manuscript, it is my sincere hope that it will be one that is well-suited for publication in *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development (JHCEAD)*. I consider our journal to be one that is author-friendly, and my heart sinks whenever I come to the conclusion that I should decline a piece for publication. All too often, the decision not to publish is related to the fact that the content of the manuscript is not clearly related to humanism. In fact, this may be the most common problem that I find in submitted manuscripts. As a result, my purpose in writing this editorial is to provide guidelines for preparing manuscripts in which humanistic themes are central and salient.

In a previous editorial on recommended practices for publishing in scholarly journals, Smaby, Crews, and Downing (1999) found a significant correlation between the quality of a manuscript's introduction and the final disposition of the manuscript. They recommended that submitting authors include a current review of the literature and a statement of the importance of the problem being addressed. Of course, when preparing a manuscript for *JHCEAD*, similar recommendations apply. In addition, the authors should discuss the relevance of the manuscript to humanism or humanistic counseling. On several occasions, I have read comments from *JHCEAD*'s editorial reviewers similar to the following: "While your proposed program is obviously humane, I am not sure how it pertains to humanism."

I strongly encourage authors to put on their humanistic spectacles while preparing their manuscripts for submission to *JHCEAD*. I provide the following sections detailing "Themes Characteristic of the Humanistic Perspective" and "The Evolutionary Nature of Humanism and Humanistic Counseling" as guides for facilitating humanistic perspective-taking.

THEMES CHARACTERISTIC OF THE HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

For a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and related manuscript topics, it is possible to make strong connections to the humanistic literature. However, in many cases author(s) appear to be unaware of the importance

of making these theoretical or thematic connections explicit, or perhaps are not certain how to do so. For this reason, here I provide examples of humanistic themes and principles. One source of this type of information comes from the first paragraph of *JHCEAD's* "Guidelines for Authors," which is published in most issues and repeated as follows:

The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development invites articles and studies that focus on counseling from a humanistic perspective, highlighting education and development. Featured topics include the design and implementation of humanistic counseling strategies and instructional programs for changing systems into more humanistically oriented organizations. Articles emphasizing the human factors that influence counseling, teaching, learning, growing, and living are sought. They may touch on a wide variety of issues, including humanistic theories and goals, the integration of human potential practices, and strategies for making human service and educational organizations more people responsive.

A key aspect of this description is the term *people responsive*. This term applies to practices that highlight "relating to human beings in growth-producing ways" (Bohart, 2003, p. 107). Occasionally, I receive manuscripts in which humanistic themes are somewhat present, but the primary focus seems to be on recommendations that benefit the counseling profession or an organization (e.g., an emphasis on screening or gatekeeping functions) rather than the individual. Although these manuscripts are usually well-written and scholarly, in comparison with manuscripts where people-responsive practices are the primary focus, they are less likely to be accepted for publication in *JHCEAD*.

Another issue I commonly encounter involves manuscripts in which a connection to humanism may have existed, but the author(s) did not adequately explain that connection. When authors do not describe how their manuscript is relevant to humanism, they run the risk that reviewers will fail to recognize this relevance and recommend that their submission be rejected. Because increased familiarity with the fundamental premises of humanism and humanistic counseling may enable authors to more clearly identify and describe humanistic elements in their manuscripts, I provide a list of these premises, originally developed by Ausbacher, that are cited in Raskin, Rogers, and Witty (2008, p. 146):

1. Creativity is a powerful force in the lives of people;
2. A holistic approach is more effective than a reductionistic approach;
3. Counseling is essentially based on a good relationship;
4. Sense of purpose, rather than cause, is the primary influence on human behavior; and
5. It is necessary for counselors to understand and value individuals' subjective experiences (e.g., feelings, opinions, values).

In addition to the aforementioned premises, Cain (2001, pp. 6–13) provided the following "defining characteristics" of humanistic therapies:

1. A positive view of the individual as self-actualizing
2. An emphasis on the critical role of empathy in enhancing the quality of the individual's counseling experience
3. A belief that individuals have the capacity to actively and intentionally construct meaning in their lives
4. A belief that people have the freedom, right, and ability to choose their goals and how to achieve them
5. A belief in the dignity of every human being

Although it is not explicitly stated by Cain (2001), a logical extension of the fourth and fifth characteristics is a belief in the importance of practices that promote tolerance and diversity and uphold human rights. A manuscript's introduction should explicitly describe its conceptual foundation and should also highlight how this conceptual foundation reflects a humanistic perspective. One good example of how this can be handled comes in the current *JHCEAD* issue from Grimmatt and Paisley (2008) in the introduction to their investigation of beliefs held by school counselors:

The purpose of the following study was to assess the beliefs of practicing professional school counselors regarding specific educational issues. Theoretically, this research is grounded in the principles of humanism and multiculturalism, including a focus on strengths, hope, optimism, encouragement, and the provision of appropriate and supportive environments to promote human development (Hazler, 2001). (p. 100)

Another good example comes from McLaughlin (2006) who wrote the following in the introduction to his article on teaching diagnosis to counselors-in-training:

The issue is not if formal diagnosis will be included in counselor training but rather how it will be included so as to fit in with counseling's humanism (Hansen, 2003; Ivey & Ivey, 1998). I opine that a second "both/and" way of giving students diagnostic skill while holding on to counseling's humanism is to teach diagnosis from a social constructivist perspective. (p. 166)

Because manuscripts describing approaches emphasizing humanism and humanistic principles are more likely to be perceived as appropriate for publication in *JHCEAD*, authors should critically examine the theoretical base of approaches they recommend. Although some counseling approaches, such as person-centered, Adlerian, existential, and gestalt therapies, have a decidedly humanistic theoretical base, other theoretical approaches are viewed as less humanistic because they include central tenets that are in direct conflict with the fundamental tenets of humanism. For example, psychoanalytic therapy is associated with a deterministic view of human nature that is inconsistent with humanism's emphasis on free will. If a manuscript is based on a theoretical foundation that contains elements inconsistent with humanism, the onus is on the author to convincingly explain how his or her manuscript is consistent with the humanistic perspective.

In addition to composing an effective introduction, it is important that the language and the content throughout the manuscript reflect humanistic values. Occasionally, we have received a manuscript that included one or more inconsistent elements. For example, one recent submission described an innovative developmental approach to counseling, but the description implied that participation would be mandatory rather than voluntary. Another manuscript had several creative approaches to fostering counselor development but included one approach that emphasized the role of technology to the exclusion of any sort of human relationship. Other examples of inconsistencies include using inappropriate language or terms. For example, I recently received a manuscript in which the counselor was repeatedly referred to as the “gate keeper” and another in which humans were referred to as “human animals.” Keeping humanistic values in mind throughout the manuscript development process can help authors reduce or eliminate inconsistencies that may delay or even prevent publication.

THE EVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF HUMANISM AND HUMANISTIC COUNSELING

Because humanistic counseling approaches are continuously evolving, *JHCEAD* welcomes manuscripts reflecting this evolutionary process. A prime example of this principle is the recent development of *motivational interviewing* (MI; Miller & Rollnick, 2002), an integrative approach largely founded on Rogers’s (1957) facilitative conditions (i.e., genuineness, respect, and empathy), that is primarily used to treat individuals with addictive behaviors. However, MI also incorporates nontraditional influencing skills (e.g., the use of selective summaries or the use of scaling techniques to enhance client motivation). Another example of recent innovations in humanistic therapy is *client-directed counseling* (Duncan & Miller, 2000), which takes traditional client-centered counseling a step further. In client-directed counseling, the client selects the treatment goals, personality theory, and treatment approach. In summarizing the ways in which humanistic therapies have evolved, Cain (2001) noted a primary theme is that in recent years, these therapies have become increasingly “individualized” (p. 44) to meet the specific preferences and needs of any given client.

In light of these rapidly occurring changes, it is understandable that an author may break with tradition or challenge some of the fundamental aspects of humanistic counseling. For example, in a recent article published in *JHCEAD*, Hansen (2007) challenged the fundamental humanistic proposition that a primary goal of counseling should be for clients to become more congruent (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1951). More specifically, Hansen asserted, “the congruent self may also be less adaptive and functional than a multifaceted, incongruent self, which can flexibly respond to the multiple role demands of contemporary life” (pp. 137–138). More important, Hansen provided a cogent analysis of the relevant humanistic literature and cited

well-respected scholars to support his critique. In addition, he convincingly argued that his proposed recommendations for a more pragmatic form of humanism will facilitate increased counseling effectiveness with regard to cherished goals, including more mature client–counselor relationships and client liberation. Accordingly, I welcome such articles challenging traditional beliefs and recommending innovative counseling approaches, providing they include a review of relevant humanistic literature and contribute to the advancement of humanistic knowledge.

SUMMARY

In my role as editor, all too commonly I receive manuscripts that do not appear to be closely related to humanism. Consequently, my purpose for writing this editorial has been to encourage and assist authors in preparing manuscripts with central and salient humanistic content. Toward this end, I have provided a summary of fundamental propositions and defining characteristics of humanism and humanistic therapies. I have also provided two examples of how recently published authors highlighted their articles' humanistic relevance in their introductions. Last, due to the evolutionary nature of humanism, I also invite manuscripts that challenge traditional humanistic propositions and practices, providing they are written in the spirit of contributing to the advancement of humanism.

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