

## Titular Colonicity and Scholarship: New Zealand Research and Scholarly Impact

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Titular colonicity has been postulated as an indicator of scholarship in psychological research in North America. The current study examined the frequency and growth of titular colonicity in two scholarly New Zealand journals and also examined its relationship to scholarly impact. Titular colonicity was an indicator of scholarship in terms of publishability and productivity, but was only weakly related to scholarly impact.

In a recent issue of *American Psychologist*, Dillon (1981) argued that titular colonicity (the presence of a colon in the article title) is a correlate of scholarly quality. His investigation began with the casual impression that publication titles in psychology and education are hard to read, long, complicated and awkward. Closer inspection revealed that most of the recent titles contained a colon. Intrigued by the role that the colon might play in scholarly publication Dillon extracted 474 unpublished titles from current volumes of *Dissertation Abstracts International* and *Resources in Education*, and 314 published titles from current issues of ten journals each in psychology, education and literary criticism. Scholarly journals were contrasted with nonscholarly journals.

Dillon found that 72% of titles in scholarly journals contained a colon, while only 13% of titles in nonscholarly journals contained a colon. Some suggestion of the colon being causally related to publishability across a research career was evident in the education titles. Colonic titles were low in the early career publication of *Dissertation Abstracts* (11%) and *Resources in Education* (20%), high in mid-career scholarly journals (66%), followed by a plummeting to 6% in nonscholarly journals. Evidence from another study indicated that titular colonicity is currently four to five times greater than in 1950. In summary, "The colon characterizes scholarly publication, correlates with scholarly productivity, manifests complexity of scholarly thought, denotes scholarly distinction, and marks scholarly progress" (p 880).

This conclusion suggests that journal

scholarship might be determined objectively through an analysis of titular colonicity. One purpose of the current investigation was to compare the frequency of titular colonicity in New Zealand journals with that of North American journals as reported by Dillon. A second purpose was to examine a shortcoming of Dillon's conclusion, that it fails to address the aspect of scholarship known as scholarly impact. Scholarly impact can be assessed by frequency of citations and, extending Dillon's conclusion, it was predicted that titles containing colons would receive more citations than those without colons.

### Method

A brief informal survey among colleagues revealed that, with complete unanimity, the *New Zealand Psychologist* (NZP) and the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* (NZJES) were rated the most scholarly journals for publication of psychological research in New Zealand. These journals began publication in 1972 and 1966 respectively. Every issue of these journals through to 1981 was searched for psychological articles and to note the presence or absence of a colon. No attempt was made to establish the reliability of the procedure, but in two instances where the index page of a journal was inadvertently photocopied and scored twice, the tallies were identical. This resulted in 266 titles (112 in NZP and 154 in NZJES).

For comparison purposes the proportion of colonic titles was also calculated for all issues of the *Australian Journal of Psychology* (AJP) from 1972-1981 (250 titles), the *New Zealand Bulletin of Psychology* for 1954 and 1955—the only volumes available in the Auckland Uni-

versity library—(21 titles), and all titles listed in Pickens' (1979) list of unpublished studies in education for 1975-1978 (353 titles).

To investigate the relationship between titular colonicity and citation frequency two colonic and two non-colonic titles were selected from each of the 1977 volumes of 10 scholarly journals in psychology (e.g. CD, EPM, JAP, JCCP, JEP, JPSP). The journals were selected from Koulack and Keselman's (1975) lists of the major journals in the various fields of psychology. Citation counts for the 40 articles were obtained from the Social Sciences Citation Index for 1977-1981. Self citations were excluded.

### Results and Discussion

#### *Titular Colonicity in New Zealand*

To achieve comparability between NZP and NZJES, the 1966 to 1971 volumes of the latter journal were analyzed separately. During that time 12 (26%) of the 46 psychological article titles contained a colon. Of historical interest, the first recognition of the importance of a positive residual following the Post CC-Pre CC transformation was G. A. Nuthall's (1969) titular "Research Note: Sex differences in ratings of the occupational status of teaching."

Across the 10 volumes from 1972 to 1981 for both journals combined the colonicity rate was 28%; the rate for NZP was 28% while for NZJES it was 29%. Given the North American colonicity rates of 72% for scholarly journals and 13% for nonscholarly journals it might be suggested that the local journals are 39% as scholarly as scholarly American journals and more than twice as scholarly as nonscholarly American journals. At the same time it might be claimed that the local journals are slightly more scholarly than the *Australian Journal of Psychology* which has a colonicity rate of 26%.

The reasons for the difference in colonicity between North America and New Zealand are not clear. It may be that local editors and authors strive for simpler, more readable titles in published research. Thus, it might be expected that there would be a type of hemispheric inversion of the North American figures in which local unpublished research titles would exceed published titles in colon-

icity. This expectation was not confirmed in Pickens' data of 353 unpublished titles—titular colonicity was only 12%. Alternatively, the lower local colonicity rate may reflect the tendency of local scholars to publish their most scholarly (colonic) research in scholarly North American journals.

There is some evidence that local researchers are being encouraged in the use of titular colonicity. When the volumes for 1972-1976 are contrasted with those for 1977-1981 there is a rise in colonicity from 22% to 34% (paralleled by a similar rise in AJP). Most of this increase can be attributed to NZP which increased from 15% to 40%. This local increase in colonicity is even more evident when the recent titles are compared with those in the *New Zealand Bulletin of Psychology* for 1954 and 1955 when colons were used a mere 5% of the time. On the basis of a linear projection the New Zealand journals should approach the current colonicity of the scholarly American journals by 1997; for NZP it could be ten years earlier.

Of interest to Dillon's claim of a relationship between colonicity and scholarly productivity, the six most productive scholars (those with five or more publications in the two journals, exclusive of replies, counter-replies, and counter-counter replies) had a colonicity rate of 31%, slightly in excess of the overall rate. All six scholars (Clay, Elley, Glynn, Maxwell, Stacey and Tuck) had colons among their published titles, although only Clay (67%) and Stacey (60%) were predominantly colonic.

#### *Colonicity and Citations*

The 20 colonic titles yielded a total of 707 citations while the 20 non-colonic titles yielded 217 citations. However, a large proportion of this superiority was due to a single paper which had 340 citations; the median frequencies were 8.5 and 5.0, respectively. A nonparametric randomization test of the mean differences (Siegel, 1956) revealed a marginally significant superiority of citation frequency for the colonic titles,  $t = 1.34$ ,  $p < .10$  (one tail).

It is clear that the emergence of the colon as a correlate of scholarship is present in New Zealand research titles. Twice as many colons are found in titles published in

scholarly journals than are found in unpublished titles, and it is a device used by all of the most productive local scholars. Colonic growth is dramatically emphasized in the eight-fold increase in the psychological journals between 1954-1955 and 1976-1981. However, conclusions about the scholarly significance of the colon must be tempered by the finding that titular colonicity is only weakly related to scholarly impact as measured by frequency of citations.

The preceding comment notwithstanding, aspiring scholars must recognize the increasing importance of sesquipedalian research titles which are characterized by an elongated post-colonic clause and a cadence unrelat-

ed to normal speech. Deft and subtle placement of the colon brings its own rewards.

#### References

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