



Reflections on Leonard Bickman and His Career: A Compilation of Letters

Sonja K. Schoenwald¹ · Catherine P. Bradshaw²

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According to Merriam-Webster, a Festschrift is “a volume of writings by different authors presented as a tribute or memorial especially to a scholar” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Festschrift>). We close this Festschrift Special Issue with writings that are not scholarly articles, but tributes in the form of letters reflecting on Len and his career. Fourteen letters are compiled into this single document. There is remarkable consistency with respect to the professional, personal, and relational attributes observed by the letter writers, colleagues and friends who first met Len before he had earned his doctorate and those who met him subsequently. Across time and a richly diversified portfolio of pursuits, roles, and contributions, the essences of Len come through in letters, some of which interleave humorous anecdotes with incisive observations. To facilitate navigation of this document, we grouped letters into sections. The section headers do not do justice to the contents that follow, however; because the experiences conveyed by letter authors often spanned multiple decades, professional roles, and enterprises. We hope readers will appreciate each letter in its own right.

Sonja K. Schoenwald and Catherine P. Bradshaw
Guest Editors

The Early Years

To Colleagues and Friends of Len:

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute our personal reflections on Len Bickman, informed by more than 50 years

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✉ Sonja K. Schoenwald
sonja.schoenwald@oslc.org

¹ Oregon Social Learning Center, Eugene, Oregon, United States

² University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, United States

of fond memories. In the late 60s, the three of us joined the Psychology Department at Smith College as young assistant professors. That professional connection ended when Len left Smith only a few years later. Fortunately, what flourished was a friendship among couples: Len and Corinne, Don and Mary, Pete and Ann, sharing the joys and challenges of raising a family and the unavoidable health crises of aging. Len continues to see us as colleagues, sounding boards for his ideas and interests, and over the years we’ve enjoyed our many visits filled with updates on Len’s varied professional pursuits. “You’ll find this interesting,” he’ll say as he shares his latest insight, new project or research data and we’re off on a lively discussion of matters that concern us all.

As a social psychologist, Len’s early research involved observing and analyzing social functioning in situ, thereby removing the uncertainty of generalizing from artificial laboratory settings. Students loved Len’s classes and the wide variety of research they were able to design and conduct in the local community. Some of this research led to effective and long-standing municipal programs, e.g., the striped crosswalks on our city streets are the direct result of research that found drivers far more likely to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks with stripes than those with parallel lines. For students, opportunities to conduct research in natural settings paired engaging “laboratory” work with the serious study of research protocols.

Len built an impressive body of social research in a short period of time, but not long after he left Smith, he became fascinated with evaluation research, and over time built an even more impressive resumé in that area. As his colleagues at Smith, we might have predicted that someday Len would be honored for a significant body of research, but it wouldn’t have entered our minds that Len’s work ultimately would focus on children’s mental health services. Nevertheless, we would have expected the work to be important for the same reason we have effective crosswalks in our downtown: Len doesn’t just want to reveal problems, his goal is to solve them.

In both his professional work and personal life, Len's love of electronic devices and computer-driven systems is legendary, and they serve to make life easier, safer or more interesting. Years ago, the front door key gave way to a keypad, then to a key fob and currently to an iPhone app that frees him from having to be anywhere near Florida to let someone in! His home is air conditioned, heated, humidified, and a garden of indoor plants watered on schedule. To the great fascination of his friends, he can monitor from afar the interior of his home with a simple click. And Len never wants for companionship; if Corinne is off playing Mahjong, he can tease Siri with a string of trick questions.

At the heart of our reflections is the fact that we value Len more as a friend than a colleague. It's unlikely that we'll have an opportunity to read the special issue of your journal inspired by the 2018 Festschrift. Rather, we hope to be using our time to talk with Len and Corinne about their children's lives, their extensive travels and our respective health challenges, always looking forward to the next visit and the moment when Len looks up from his reading and says, "You'll find this interesting."

Ann & Pete Pufall

Mary & Don Reutener

Northampton, Massachusetts

To the Editors:

I first met Len in the early fall of 1963 at Columbia where we were enrolled in the experimental psychology program. I arrived by train, a naïve thing from the state capital of California. He came down from the Bronx by way of City College. We were *rara avis* one to the other and intensely curious about everything in our new world. I can't tell you a great deal of the beginning of his career, but I do remember some things that characterized him then that may be germane. He was in love with and engaged to the serene, beautiful Corinne. He did not like to eat alone. He particularly favored eating Chinese on Sunday nights. He was very ambitious but would not worship the Columbia deities or orthodoxies. He was very, very funny. He and Corinne and I, with the addition of my husband in 1969, have been friends since then. We have visited a number of times over the years in Northampton, Northbrook, Nashville, Pasadena, New York and Orcas Island. It's been the kind of friendship where the conversation resumes where it last left off, full of laughter, family, politics, and his work. And by the way, I still call him Lenny.

Sincerely,

Kaaren Slawson

Olga, Washington

To the Editors:

I have known Leonard Bickman for 55 years. We were graduate students together for four years at the City University of New York.

Len and I shared classes and mentors, Dr. Harold Proshansky and Dr. Stanley Milgram. Throughout our time as students together, I was always impressed by his intellect, curiosity and drive and continue to be feel that way to this day. It was always gratifying to witness how he analyzed and even challenged data and to this day I know I can rely on him for his thoughtful and insightful responses.

Even though we pursued different fields of study, our friendship endured. We have been family friends as well, celebrating the growth of our families and our careers from different parts of the country.

I admire all of the accomplishments Len has achieved and I am grateful that we and our families have remained friends.

Mimi Liebman, Ph.D.

Director

Staff Development Institute

White Plains, New York

Author, Author

To the Editors:

I think the first time I met Len Bickman was the summer of 1988 at APA. He was wearing yellow suspenders, a striped shirt, and gray pants. He was talking to someone, and I could tell by the way he smirked and moved that he had a sense of humor. I introduced myself as his new Sage editor and made some remark about the suspenders. He made some glib response back, and so a 30+ year friendship and publishing relationship was born.

Humor, or what some might call sarcasm, was Len's trademark—aimed as often at himself as others. His quick wit coupled with his sharp assessment of proposals and studies made him fun to work with as he and Debra Rog developed Sage's acclaimed Applied Social Research Methods series of books. Len was "America's Got Talent" unerring scout for who could write the best book on a particular research technique. He would find and persuade the right methodologists to write a book, give them cogent feedback on their writing, and Deb would provide the authors with the details as to how to improve the book's coverage. They made (and continue to make) a great editorial team. He even wrote, along with Deb and Terry Hendrick, a highly regarded book for the series, *Applied Research Design*, which Tom Cook at Northwestern called "a fine book" that "hits all the right nails squarely on the head." The Applied Social Research Methods (ASRM) books became one of the major sources for researchers and graduate students to learn how to do

case study research methods, survey research, meta-analysis, qualitative design and more.

Past adopters of the ASRM books kept asking me if we could create a single reference book on the cutting-edge research and best practices for different applied methods techniques, and so the *Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods* was curated by Len and Deb in '97 and revised for a second edition in 2008. Before this Len with Deb launched a new edited book series, *Children's Mental Health Services: Research, Policy and Evaluation*, which provided a systematic scholarly analysis of children's mental health needs and the policies and programs that might serve them. On the program evaluation front, Len edited two books on Donald Campbell's legacy—one on research design and the other on validity and social experimentation. A future evaluation handbook is currently being developed by Len with Deb Rog that will serve as an evaluator's companion, providing expert advice to enhance the competencies evaluators need to perform exemplary evaluations. I have had the benefit of Len's insightful advice and thoughtful work all liberally leavened with frequent bon mots as a series editor, book editor, and author at two different publishing houses.

In addition to editing and writing books, I've also known Len as a fearless gadfly of social research and evaluation conventions. In the late 90's when Len was President of AEA (the American Evaluation Assn.) he challenged the membership to explore a voluntary certification and accreditation process to enhance evaluators' competencies, the quality of their evaluations, as well as the field's professional standing and influence. He challenged the primacy of RCTs as effective for conducting studies of treatments under real world conditions. Like many behavioral researchers, he hoped to be able to discover that a comprehensive system of continuous mental health care for children with problems would have a positive effect on individual children and their families. He had the temerity to report that system changes did not affect individual level outcomes in his elegant, five-year Fort Bragg study—despite long-standing beliefs.

Len keeps asking the hard questions of wicked problems, such as in treatments of mental illness, and pushing for better data collection, design, and analysis methods. He also pushes for better ways to educate future evaluators and social researchers. Lucky for all of us.

C. Deborah Laughton

Publisher, Methodology and Statistics

Senior Editor, Developmental Psychology and Geography
Guilford Publications, Inc.

To the Editors:

The Festschrift provided a wonderful opportunity to honor Len Bickman's contributions to the mental health

field. His groundbreaking research and evaluation on children's mental health services and systems are well-known and have no doubt benefitted countless children and their families, as well as influenced researchers following in his path.

From my own path with Len, which started almost forty years ago to the date I am writing this, I can offer a perspective on his contributions to applied research methodology and evaluation. Having been introduced to evaluation as a student of Terry Hedrick's at Kent State, I knew I wanted to be an evaluator. Unfortunately, Terry was moving to DC to work at Brookings Institution, so I needed to find someone with whom to work. I knew that to learn how to do evaluation well, I needed to apprentice with the best. Len, at the time, was a professor at Loyola University and directing a small research and evaluation office. In those days, Len was working on a range of topics, including retail crime, health care, school safety, among others. He also was becoming a leader in methods, having published a book on applied research methods.

Apprenticing with Len did not disappoint. I learned both the art and science of evaluation. I learned what it meant to conduct work that was rigorous and respected but had the creative edge that caught people's attention. I learned (or tried to learn) how to work "smarter, not harder". I also learned the "business" of research and evaluation. Len is that rare academic entrepreneur; he understands how to create a market as well as how to respond to evaluation requests with a value-add. I learned the importance of rigor balanced with feasibility and efficiency, and when to walk away if that balance cannot be achieved. Len's adherence to integrity in the conduct of research had an indelible mark on my approach to evaluation, often having me take hard stands that others might shrink from.

Over the years, though Len's work focused more on children's mental health and mine more in homelessness, we continued to work together on the craft of evaluation and applied research methods. As a student, Len offered me a partnership of a lifetime to be co-editor of a series of textbooks on Applied Social Research Methods for Sage Publications. After co-editing over 50 volumes, we co-edited a Handbook of Applied Research Methods and are currently work on a Handbook of Evaluation. With Terry Hedrick, we authored a book on Applied Research Design.

I am the most proud and grateful, however, to have had Len as not only a mentor but as a dear friend. He and Corinne welcomed me into their family 40 years ago, and they are like family to my son. We share a professional and personal bond that is rare. Len's dedication to his craft is only surpassed by his dedication to his family, friends, and students. I am honored to count myself among them.

Debra J. Rog, Ph.D.

Vice President

Westat
Rockville, MD

Consultant, Connector, Collaborator

To the Editors:

Leonard Bickman is a very unusual man. I begin this letter with a story of his unusualness, to indicate the value he offers to all of us.

Several years ago, I invited Len to attend the weekly research meeting I held with my team at the NYU School of Medicine. I sought Len's consultation on a difficult research problem that we faced, and I was delighted when he accepted my invitation. As the meeting began, I introduced him to team members in the customary way, by noting his many accomplishments, including his publications, grants, awards, and leadership positions in the field. I made particular note of his accomplishment on the Fort Bragg studies, which I had greatly admired on many counts. Fort Bragg was paradigm challenging. Its findings questioned the effectiveness of the System of Care model, considered by many as the highest standard to be used for the organization and implementation of child mental health services. In my introductory remarks, I used the Fort Bragg achievement to highlight Len's impact on the field, to make sure my team members understood the quality of the consultant who agreed to work with us. At some point, Len interrupted me mid-sentence. "Glenn", he said with a wry smile: "In what respect do you believe Fort Bragg had any impact, at all?" I was first startled by his words, and then I absorbed their pivotal meaning, as they slowly penetrated my skull.

A person who publicly minimizes what some regard as his most important achievement, is either unusually modest, or else he knows something that most do not know. Len's comment revealed a hard fact, that most of us do not know or, perhaps, do not want to know. Len's comment was, simply, intended to direct me, and everyone in the room, to consider the fact that more than two decades after the publication of the Fort Bragg studies, the System of Care model continues to guide the field, in a way that would be expected if the Fort Bragg studies had never been published.

Self-importance has become a center of gravity in our field. It is observed in our race to have our publications covered in the media, or spread throughout the social network, communicated as scientific breakthroughs of great consequence. It is observed in our promotion of our Evidence-based Treatments, as indicators of the power of our knowledge for the treatment of mental disorders. We aspire to accumulate indicators of our importance in the form of published manuscripts, awarded grants, and prizes awarded by our professional societies.

There are, however, other important facts to consider. Such facts concern, for example, the limited penetration of scientific discoveries in typical practice, and of the much smaller effect sizes of the Evidence-based treatments when implemented in usual practice compared to the effect observed in the clinical trial. These facts of course are critically important for guiding our ability to improve the lives of children with mental disorders, and their families. These are the facts that Len cares about. These are the facts that he has dedicated his career to address. And this dedication reveals Len's unusualness, and importance, in the field.

Len conducted the Fort Bragg studies to make a difference, and he could not celebrate its achievement when such difference was not made. He holds the field to these standards, and he applies them to himself first. He understands that real achievement is hard, takes great effort, over long periods of time, and is never guaranteed. This understanding comes from an appreciation of the daunting complexity of mental disorders and of the limitations of the service system in which these disorders must be prevented and treated.

When a person truly grasps the complexity and challenge of the problems their work is dedicated to solve, they, of course, expect that they will be wrong much more often than they are right. I have rarely met anyone in our field who is so open about being wrong, and so thoughtful about what he has learned from his errors. And I so much wish this work ethic was more commonly encountered. In Len's case, it has fueled his continuing search for new methods, new tools, new approaches to improve the impact of his work. This searching can be seen in his work on new ways to conduct clinical trials, or developing measurement feedback systems, or more recently in his work applying Machine Learning methods.

Science requires the strength of character to relentlessly pursue the truth wherever it may lead, even if the facts disprove, diminish, or invalidate the ideas one holds dear, or serves to diminish one's status in the field. To put it mildly, such pursuit is hard, and Len sets a standard to which I aspire. As I have said: Leonard Bickman is a very unusual man.

Glenn Saxe, MD

Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
New York University School of Medicine

To the Editors, For Len:

Reflections on Len Bickman: Finding the Middle Ground

I believe we were matched. I clearly remember this colleague saying..." you would do well with Len...you should meet him." Not knowing you at the time...I hoped this was a compliment. What I did know of you is that you were the guru of evaluation. You had taken on the field with the Ft. Bragg study. You were willing to be forceful, controversial, and willing to stand by the outcomes of evidence.

It did not take long for our differences to arise. Your read of the literature told you that programs were all the same... "everything was the same," and not much of it worked. I had focused my career on the evidence of what did work. My read of the literature was that specific programs did work when done well and supported with proper implementation. Like you, I could be strong-willed and willing to take strong stands. One would not think that a decade of collaboration would come from a beginning based on such different views.

Our work with measurement feedback was the common ground where we discovered how our views were actually quite similar. It is so curious to me that we were pursuing a similar idea, measurement feedback, from such different paths. Unlike anyone else, you brought your evaluation eye to the Children's Mental Health and psychotherapy field as a whole. You were the first, and only, to build on the common factors ideas and create psychometrically sound ways of measuring the core features of mental health services. The Peabody Inventory is a masterpiece of work that puts the possibility of science into the idea of the common factors. Until you, the common factors perspective was always clouded in the idea that "it is there; it is the core, you just cannot measure it." I think we both believed that to keep science and practice firmly connected, we need to integrate measurement and science into evidence-based practices better as they were being implemented in communities.

It was from this early notion that the idea of Precision Behavioral Health emerged. The precision approach was based on leveraging technology to measure session by session, the core feature of a program. Once measured, we believed that it was possible to feed that information back to clinicians, who could then adjust their practice based on session by session evidence. The common ground melded evaluation and measurement with the core change mechanisms of programs used in children's mental health aim to revolutionize the field.

Our NIMH grant was a grand idea to test the idea of measurement feedback: combine a well-established evidence-based program with a computer-based platform and test whether the precision-based approach worked. The project required a large implementation site and your CFS system. Our teams worked hard. We brought good implementation science, strong measurement, and complex analysis. We had just one problem, CFS would not work. In the end, our most significant idea was a failure. Despite all our efforts, we could not successfully translate the vision to the software.

The end of a big project can sometimes end relationships. Ours did not. Together we became believers that traditional science was essential but unlikely to be the tool to improve children's mental health. Instead, the future of excellent service was to use that evidence-based practices guided by the use of evidence in every treatment encounter. Research and practice were not one different ends of the field, but instead

different sides of the same coin. The other outcome of our NIMH failure was our computer system, Care4. A technology system that brings together good science and systematic practice that can be adapted to any treatment system.

We became colleagues later in our careers. I think that is a good thing. I think it meant that we were both ready to open about different ideas and different approaches.

I will always cherish the middle ground we created between us.

Thomas L. Sexton, Ph. D., ABPP
Professor Emeritus
Indiana University
Functional Family Therapy/Care4

To the Editors:

Len is a brave man with lots of evaluation integrity. He calls it as he sees the data. He has done evaluations that include the famous Fort Bragg Study which have led him to receive huge amounts of criticism both professional and personal. Some might say he was even vilified. He weathered the storm by responding thoughtfully and using data and insight to make hard recommendations. While not everyone would agree with his interpretations, his steadfastness made people reckon with tough issues.

Len has taken on many very important evaluations in his career including evaluating the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. He has also been hard on himself in trying to develop CQI systems and seeing where they work and don't work.

As a personal note, Len may have helped shape the history and trajectory of empowerment evaluation. Whether he wants to take credit or blame for this is up to him. Len is responsible for introducing me to David Fetterman at the 1992 American Evaluation Association conference in Seattle. I was invited to the conference by Shakeh Kaftarian of CSAP, since I was doing some work with CSAP. I knew almost no one at the conference. In a hotel lobby, I saw Len (who I knew from various previous settings including an international conference in Israel). Len was talking to an energetic guy (David) and he welcomed me into the conversation, and he introduced us. We were in Seattle in the 1990s and Seattle coffee was becoming famous. Someone suggested the 3 of us take a walk and look for coffee; David and I found out how much we had in common. This eventually led to David inviting me to participate in 2 keynotes at the following year's AEA conference in which David was the President. The rest is.....

As a side note, there is an interesting link that Len and David have—with Stanley Milgram. Len was mentored by Milgram at CUNY. David was a subject in a Milgram experiment. Not only did David not shock the confederate, he walked out of the experiment and was going to report it

to the authorities, when he was stopped. (It is clear to me that both Len and David have character (and chutzpah).

I really admire Len for his devotion to his craft, to his family, and for continuing to do important work and reach out to the future (e.g., his work on artificial intelligence)—way beyond his formal retirement from Vanderbilt. One of the things I treasure most in my career is interacting with people who have “character”; Len is definitely one of them.

Abe Wandersman

President and CEO of the Wandersman Center

Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC, USA

Dear Len,

Your challenges to the field were not always gentle. You established standards for services research which significantly promoted the growth of the field. I appreciated you as a valuable colleague and eager to know how you will just have a good time.

Your friend and colleague,

Barbara

Barbara Jean Burns, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Director, Services Effectiveness Program

Duke University School of Medicine

Durham, NC

Mentor

To the Editors:

Question the Assumptions: A Len Bickman Festschrift Contribution

Given the importance of Len Bickman’s influence on my career and on the field of mental health services research, it is quite meaningful to me to contribute to a festschrift in Len’s honor. I was fortunate to meet Len in 1993. I was interviewing at Vanderbilt for their Clinical Psychology program. I was not there to interview with Len as he was not on the clinical faculty. However, I met his wife, Corinne, and it came up that I was familiar/impressed with an article that Len had written on program theory (Bickman 1987). She then set up an interview for me with Len the same day. I remember during the interview talking about a program evaluation that I was involved with and Len easily coming up with helpful suggestions (Len never lacks for ideas!).

When I started working with Len as his graduate student, I had the opportunity to work on Len’s famous Fort Bragg evaluation (Bickman 1996). It was an amazing experience to watch Len stand up to popular beliefs about how mental health services should be delivered and emphasize that

data and not our assumptions should drive mental health policy. Working on that project and others simultaneously (Len has an amazing ability to run numerous projects), I performed the typical activities that graduate students do for their advisor (e.g., analyze data, look up research, write, propose ideas) and Len provided typical advisor information (i.e., feedback). It seems fitting that Len would publish numerous papers on feedback to clinicians (e.g., Sapyta et al. 2005) given that Len was famous amongst graduate students/colleagues for not being shy about giving direct, objective feedback about task performance! In addition, one did not go into a meeting with Len unprepared to justify one’s beliefs, as I have never met anyone in my life who was better at uncovering untested and/or unsupported assumptions. It wasn’t just his students who knew this, Len has always taken pride in trying to improve mental health services by making sure that our field was clearly aware of the untested assumptions that were operating beneath our practices of service delivery (Bickman 1999).

Not surprisingly, Len had a tremendous influence on my career. Working with Len, I developed an interest in studying the assumptions behind how therapy/mental health services are supposed to work. I learned not to take for granted what people believe happens when a therapist is with a client or when a prevention program is delivering a service. This led to my involvement in studies examining the therapeutic alliance and research examining processes by which suicide prevention is supposed to work. Procedurally, because of Len’s influence, I’m a tough mentor of my graduate students. They know that any research they do with me will need to be driven by some program theory or logic model and they are prepared for a lot of feedback as I will ask them about the evidence or theory that is supposed to support what they write... just as Len would do.

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Marc S. Karver, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology,

University of South Florida,

Tampa, FL

To the Editors:

Chance encounters lead to some of the most meaningful opportunities to do good. While reading Len's article (this issue), it struck me that the story of his 50-year career is speckled with little chances that led to big things—like the seminal Fort Bragg study that began with a simple favor to a friend. Len and I met when his relocation to Palm Beach led to a part-time appointment at Florida International University (FIU). When Len arrived, I was preparing to take my adolescent ADHD intervention into the world of mental health services research without a suitable guide. Len became a critical advisor to our project and urged me to think bigger picture about solving the roadblocks our implementation efforts uncovered. I remain incredibly grateful for his openness to collaborate and his influence on my thinking about what I can do as a researcher to help kids and providers in greatest need.

A lot of good also has come from Len's perpetual dissatisfaction with the status quo. Even after he retired from full-time research, his dissatisfaction remains in full force. So much so, that he read everything he could find about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in an attempt to solve usual care therapy's effectiveness problem. Len's not wrong. The processes that determine therapeutic effectiveness are highly complex. We have spent decades throwing our human capacities at this problem without a lot of success. Maybe the blueprint for effective therapy can only be drafted by the infinite capacity of machines. His weather prediction analogy (see Bickman, this issue) really resonates with me—why are we trying to forecast mental health—an outcome influenced by infinite causal variables—with the simplicity of a two, three, or four variable experiments? Moreover, how do we get cutting edge AI tools into the hands of clinicians—the people who actually need to make critical everyday decisions that support patient mental health? Len's ongoing dissatisfaction was connecting dots again and I was glad to be a part of it.

It seems like the next chapter of my work with Len begins with yet another chance encounter. In early 2019, I announced my relocation to the University of Washington (UW). This news came in the midst of Len's knee-deep immersion in the intersection of AI and mental health service delivery. Meanwhile, I was knee-deep in a fidelity problem when my ADHD intervention entered community settings. Len was confident that AI was my answer. I was open-minded but daunted by a high-tech field I knew nothing about. In his reading, Len discovered that most research on AI-based fidelity measurement was coming out of my new UW department. Somehow, Len found himself in a room with my new chair a few weeks later and forged a connection. Before I knew it, we were writing a really cool grant. I have no idea if it will get funded, but I am confident that I am a broader and deeper thinker about mental health services because of my work with Len.

Margaret H. Sibley

Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

University of Washington School of Medicine
Seattle, WA

Editor in Chief, Among Other Things: Associate Editors' Perspectives

To the Editors:

I first "met" Len in the early seventies, when I was a graduate student in social psychology at Monash University in Melbourne. My supervisor at the time recommended Len's "Beyond the Laboratory", which I acquired and still have. As readers who know Len would expect, it was engaging and full of good advice. However, after flirting with social psychology, I was seduced by clinical psychology and my life took a different direction.

Some 25 years later, I was co-ordinating a graduate program in mental health for the University of Queensland and had my first in person encounter with Len. He had been invited by Barry Nurcombe, a child psychiatrist and former colleague at Vanderbilt to spend some time in the Department of Psychiatry at UQ, where I was teaching. Len's interests had also drawn him into the clinical realm and specifically into children's mental health services.

Len and I hit it off immediately. I quickly discovered that Len was a serious disrupter, well before the term became fashionable. His *modus operandi* was to challenge cherished assumptions. He never failed to get a discussion going and often those involved had no idea where it was going. His combination of charm, wit and Bronx bluntness usually managed to get beneath the guard of those involved. He also had boundless enthusiasm and a willingness to try out ideas and get people engaged in new ways of doing things.

Over the following years I got to know Len and his family pretty well. We collaborated on projects in Australia and the US and I learned an enormous amount from him about engaging with service providers and supervising students. He always had a good team of people around him, so I also learned about data analysis and project management. Len could be irascible at times but there was never any malice and he attracted enormous affection and loyalty as well as respect and admiration.

I don't know whether Len learnt anything about the clinical side of mental health services from me. I do know that he was genuinely interested and curious, always with a view to trying to work out how to make services more effective.

Len got me involved in this journal and I was proud to contribute as a member of the editorial team, sending out manuscripts for review and making recommendations about publication. Len was very committed to improvement of the

journal and he oversaw a steady growth in its impact. Eventually I moved away from active engagement in research and evaluation and therefore, necessarily, from the journal.

Family was and remains of enormous importance to Len. I got to know Corinne pretty well and it is impossible to underestimate her importance in his much-decorated career. They drew me into their life with great warmth and generosity and we spent a lot of time together, including a memorable day when they introduced my wife and I to the Bronx neighbourhood they grew up in, and an equally memorable time wandering through the Jewish quarter in Girona. Corinne once told me that she regarded me as a “mensch”. Such is my respect for the Bickmans that I hold that title with greater pride and affection than any of the professional/academic titles and distinctions that I have accumulated during my life.

Robert King, PhD, FAPS
Brisbane, Australia

To the Editors:

It is my pleasure to honor Len Bickman. I have admired his research and his leadership throughout my career and have been inspired by his integrity, wisdom, good humor, and unfailing commitment to his work and to his family. Len has tackled some of the most pressing applied research challenges in children’s mental health services with pragmatism and rigor. He has modeled advocacy for the use of science to inform practice and policy. Doing good research is difficult enough but entering the policy fray adds layers of challenges. I am proud that our field has Len as a leader taking on these challenges. His research covers tremendous range, while the ultimate goal of improving care for vulnerable children and families is always crystal clear.

There is so much I admire about Len and much of it can be summed up in the construct of **INTEGRITY**. I know I’m not alone in this sentiment. In fact, several years ago Sonja Schoenwald and I were discussing our admiration for Len during a Center dinner (a conversation undoubtedly facilitated by good food and wine). We were debating a specific methodological dilemma in a study we were leading. Facing a decision about how to move forward, we agreed that our decision should be guided by the question “What would Len do?” From then on, WWLD became an efficient decision-making reminder. With WWLD as a guidepost, decisions will be principled, data-driven, fair, and wise. At the wonderful Festschrift, I was pleased to present a baseball cap embroidered with WWLD to Len.

I could list so many specific ways in which Len has inspired and challenged me and my colleagues, but I will share just one more anecdote readers may appreciate. I invited Len to San Diego to meet with a group of clinicians who were partnering with us on studies of usual

community-based care. Just prior to the meeting, Len published an article with one of his notably subtle titles, “The death of treatment as usual: An excellent first step on a long road.” Great timing! What could go wrong? As you may imagine, we had worked for years to foster a strong, mutually respectful collaborative relationship with this group of treatment as usual clinicians. What was I thinking to bring Len in to meet with them? What might he say about their lives’ work? Perhaps this was not my best idea... However, despite significant anxiety amongst our team, the meeting was terrific. Len asked lots of respectful and insightful questions. As a true social scientist, he demonstrated genuine curiosity and helped us to generate interesting future research questions.

Thank you for including my tribute in this well-deserved honorary volume and thank you to Len for your inspiring leadership and wisdom.

Sincerely,
Ann F. Garland, PhD

Associate Editor, *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*

Professor, School of Leadership and Education Sciences, University of San Diego

To the Editors:

What a tremendous privilege to contribute a letter honoring Len Bickman. I had the great pleasure of meeting Len soon after I joined the faculty at Florida International University (FIU). Given how long I had admired his work, I was especially excited when I learned he was also moving to south Florida and expressing interest in collaborating. During our earliest meetings Len described the rich history of several datasets that he was eager to share. I was immediately struck by his generosity, the complete absence of any sense of proprietary or ownership over data, and his genuine desire to support students and young faculty to build their careers. I was equally struck by his optimism about the narrowing gap between science and service, and his confidence that advancing knowledge would provoke change and improve care for children and families—that these were synergistic and attainable—if only we could see into the distance, and trust that it’s not that far away.

Among the many ways in which Len has influenced my career, the most notable was inviting me to serve as an Associate Editor for APMH&MHSR, managing papers focused on children’s mental health. I will always be grateful to Len for his confidence in me to assume a leadership role in the journal that had become a home for so much of my work, and the one I looked to more than any other for inspiration. It has been a great joy to work with Len and serve the field in this way—and through this opportunity also learn from and connect with so many others whose innovative and outstanding work is making a difference for mental health.

It has been very special to sit across the table from Len, and hear him speak with hope, heart and wisdom about future directions for children's mental health services research. His leadership is deeply grounded in the scientific values he holds most dear—empirical rigor and professional integrity—and characterized by his authenticity, humor, and compassion. Len is also widely recognized for his candor, his willingness to be unpopular, at times contrarian—exposing faulty assumptions, flawed interpretations and outdated paradigms—and demanding that data drive decision-making and investment in science, practice, and policy. This is what makes Len an extraordinary leader, as well as an *extraordinary* scientist (Popper 1977).

I'll end my tribute with a favorite moment from one of my first meetings with Len, during which several colleagues and students in the clinical science program at FIU had gathered to discuss opportunities for collaboration. In the middle of meeting, Len paused to answer the doorbell at his home—on his Apple watch—he could see his porch two counties away. At that moment, I just thought: Wow—Len's far more tech savvy than I am! Now I appreciate the rather poetic metaphor of that moment—echoed in the lesson I've learned from Len to *see into the distance, and trust that it's not that far away*. Extending my most sincere appreciation to the editors for inviting me to honor Len in this special section to celebrate his distinguished career. As Susan Douglas aptly notes (2020), Len is indeed “an innovator and a disruptor”—and with this letter I also honor him as a dear colleague, mentor, and friend.

References

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Stacy Frazier, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology, Florida International University
Associate Editor, *Administration and Policy in Mental Health & Mental Health Services Research*

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