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# Editorial: Evidence-based Guidelines for Avoiding Reference List Errors in Manuscripts Submitted to Journals for Review for Publication: A Replication Case Study of *Educational Researcher*

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*Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, Frels, and Slate (2011) reported the findings of Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013), who examined the frequency and characteristics of violations to the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide (APA, 2010) that occurred in the reference lists of 131 manuscripts submitted to Research in the Schools over a 6-year period. Findings revealed that authors committed more than 12 reference list errors per manuscript, on average (M = 12.83, SD = 7.25). Further, a total of 466 unique reference list errors were identified, which yielded 14 reference list error themes. However, it could be questioned whether the same reference list error rates would be observed among manuscripts submitted to Tier I journals. Consequently, in the present editorial, we replicate and extend their work by using mixed analysis techniques to examine the reference list error rate of 83 manuscripts submitted to the highest ranked educational journal, Educational Researcher, over a 3.5-year period. Findings revealed that Educational Researcher authors committed more than 14 reference list errors per manuscript, on average (M = 14.25, SD = 8.05). Also, a total of 324 unique reference list errors were identified, which yielded the same aforementioned 14 reference list error themes. A multiple regression analysis revealed that every author of a manuscript was associated with an increase of 2.40 reference list errors, on average. These findings support the hypothesis that journals with the highest impact factors also have manuscripts submitted to their journals that have high rates of reference list errors. Implications are discussed.*

In a previous editorial, Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, Frels, and Slate (2011) reported the findings of Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012) (see also, Onwuegbuzie & Hwang, 2013), who examined the frequency and characteristics of violations to the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide (APA, 2010) that occurred in the reference lists of manuscripts (hereafter referred to as *reference list errors*) initially submitted (i.e., *unpublished* manuscripts) to *Research in the Schools* (*RITS*), a nationally/internationally refereed journal, as well as the relationships between reference list errors and selected manuscript variables (e.g., number of authors, editor decision [e.g., reject, accept]).

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Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) used mixed research techniques to examine 131 manuscripts submitted to *RITS* over a 6-year period (i.e., 2004-2010). These researchers identified a total of 466 unique reference list errors that were identified across these 131 manuscripts, with the prevalence of each of these reference list errors ranging from 1 (0.75%) to 102 (76.7%). Also, Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) documented an average of 12 reference list errors per manuscript ($M$ = 12.83, $SD$ = 7.25).

Further, Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) conducted a qualitative analysis (i.e., constant comparison analysis; Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the identified 466 reference list errors that yielded the following 14 reference list error themes: (a) General errors; (b) Reference heading, (c) Names of authors, (d) Publication year/date, (e) Title of work, (f) Publisher information, (g) Source of journal/periodical, (h) Source of authored book, (i) Source of edited book, (j) Source of website, (k) Source of paper presentation, (l) Source of dissertation/thesis, (m)

Source of newspaper article, and (n) Source of government document. An exploratory factor analysis of these 14 reference list error themes led to the identification of four meta-themes that contained between two and five reference list error themes.

Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) also conducted a latent class analysis of the six reference list error themes that were committed by the majority (i.e., > 50%) of the 131 authors, which revealed two distinct clusters of manuscripts, with one cluster (comprising 57.1% of the manuscripts) being relatively high with respect to all six reference list error themes, and the other cluster (comprising 42.9% of manuscripts) being high on two reference list error themes and low on the remaining four reference list error themes.

Finally, Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) conducted three sets of quantitative analyses, namely, a correlation analysis, independent samples *t* test, and canonical correlation analysis. Specifically, with respect to the correlation analysis, a series of nonparametric (i.e., Spearman) correlations, after applying the Bonferroni adjustment to control for the inflation of Type I error, revealed that the number of reference list errors was statistically significantly and positively related to (a) the number of citation errors ($r_s[131] = .39$, $p < .001$), suggesting a moderate-to–large relationship (Cohen, 1988); and (b) the length of manuscript ($r_s[131] = .23$, $p < .001$), suggesting a small-to-moderate relationship (Cohen, 1988). The independent samples *t* test revealed that manuscripts that were not accepted by the editor ($M = 13.70$, $SD = 7.43$)—that is, they were either rejected or received a revise-and-resubmit decision—contained statistically significantly more reference list errors than did manuscripts that were accepted ($M = 9.44$, $SD = 4.95$), with a large effect size of 0.83 (Cohen, 1988).

A canonical correlation analysis revealed a multivariate relationship between the 14 reference list error themes and selected demographic variables. Specifically, this multivariate relationship was mainly characterized by the relationship between reference list errors associated with publisher information, source of dissertation/thesis, and source of edited book on the one side, and number of authors and length of manuscript on the other side.

However, although some of the authors who publish articles in *RITS* are among the most prolific, it is likely that a much greater proportion of prolific authors submit their manuscripts to journals with the highest impact factors. And, assuming that prolific authors tend to be the most experienced authors, it is reasonable to hypothesize that journals with the highest impact factors would have manuscripts submitted to their journals that have a significantly lower rate of reference list errors. Yet, to date, this hypothesis has not been tested empirically. Consequently, in this editorial, we replicate and extend the works of Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) and Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al. (2011) by examining the frequency and characteristics of reference list errors among manuscripts submitted to a top Tier I educational journal.

## Sources of Evidence

In order to examine the frequency and characteristics of reference list errors among manuscripts submitted initially to a top Tier I educational journal, we conducted a mixed research study of 83 manuscripts submitted to *Educational Researcher* over a period of 3.5 years. The journal *Educational Researcher* was selected because not only does it represent the premier flagship journal of the American Educational Research Association but also it represents the educational journal with the highest impact factor—specifically, its impact factor of 3.774 makes it the highest ranking among 177 journals representing education and education research. Two of the authors of this editorial were part of the editor team (i.e., editor and associate editor) of *Educational Researcher* (2006-2010) that secured this extremely high impact factor. As such, they had complete access to every manuscript submitted to *Educational Researcher* during this period. The 83 manuscripts selected for study represented those manuscripts that were submitted for the first time to the *Research News and Comment* section of *Educational Researcher*—one of two sections at that time (with the other section being called *Features* that was co-edited by Drs. Patricia B. Elmore and Gregory Camilli). Further, these 83 manuscripts represented those manuscripts that had not undergone what is referred to as a desk reject or internal rejection during the internal review process (i.e., before the manuscript is sent out for external review, the manuscript was deemed inappropriate for *Educational Researcher* because it had a focus or content that was outside the scope of the journal [e.g., the topic did not pertain to an educational issue]; did not follow adequately the stipulated format for manuscripts [e.g., the manuscript resembled more of a traditional empirical report rather than an essay]; or the manuscript was written in a style that was not adequately consistent with APA [e.g., the manuscript followed Chicago Manual of style; Chicago Manual, 2003; no discernible style]**).** In other words, each of the 83 manuscripts had satisfied the criteria for being sent out for external review. These 83 manuscripts represented 49.11%

of all manuscripts submitted to the *Research News and Comment* section of *Educational Researcher* over this period, which rendered our findings generalizable to the population of manuscripts submitted to *Educational Researcher*—at least over this period of time.

The two editors of the *Research News and Comment* section of *Educational Researcher* meticulously documented every APA error—including reference list errors—committed by these 83 sets of authors over the 3.5-year period. Each manuscript took up to 8 hours to identify all the APA errors—representing as much as 664 hours of coding. Alongside collecting information about each APA error, these editors collected an array of information corresponding to each of these manuscripts, including the following: the length of the manuscript (i.e., number of pages, number of words), the length of the reference list (i.e., total number of references), topic of the manuscript, and the number of authors per manuscript. As such, the data set created by these editors was extremely rich, representing a data set that only journal editors have the opportunity to develop.

## Methodology

Dialectic pluralism was the philosophical lens that drove our mixed research study. As conceptualized by Johnson (2012), dialectic pluralism represents a philosophical stance wherein multiple epistemological perspectives are combined by the researcher(s) within the same investigation. With respect to the data analysis step of our mixed research study, we utilized a sequential mixed analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010). Specifically, because our present study represented a replication of the studies of Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) and Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al. (2011), we used a five-stage sequential mixed analysis procedure. Each of these stages is described below.

### Stage 1 Analysis

The first stage of the sequential mixed analysis involved conducting a classical content analysis (Berelson, 1952; see also Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008, 2011) of the 83 manuscripts to determine the number of unique reference list errors. In addition, the total number of reference list errors per manuscript was identified. Thus, the classical content analysis led to the determination of prevalence rates.

### Stage 2 Analysis

Determination of the reference list errors led to the second stage. This stage involved conducting a constant comparison analysis (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the reference list errors to determine the number of themes that could be extracted from them. These themes were extracted iteratively (Constas, 1992). That is, these themes were extracted using both a priori coding and a posteriori coding. The a priori coding involved the potential use of the aforementioned 14 themes that stemmed from the study of Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013). In addition, the researchers allowed for the possibility of other themes emerging.

### Stage 3 Analysis

The third stage of the sequential mixed analysis involved quantitizing the reference list error themes (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This quantitizing involved converting the themes that were extracted in the second stage (i.e., qualitative data) to numerical codes (i.e., quantitative data) for statistical analyses. Specifically, each reference list error theme was converted to a quantitative code by assigning a "1" if the manuscript contained one or more reference list error errors that were classified under that theme and a "0" if the manuscript did not contain any reference list error errors that were classified under that theme (Onwuegbuzie, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003)—leading to the creation of what Onwuegbuzie (2003) referred to as an "inter-respondent matrix" (i.e., manuscript x reference list error theme matrix) that comprised a combination of 0s and 1s (p. 396). This inter-respondent matrix was used to conduct a principal component analysis (cf. Field, 2009) to determine the underlying structure of the reference list error themes by transforming it to a matrix of bivariate associations that represented tetrachoric correlation coefficients to take into account the fact that the reference list error themes had been quantitized to dichotomous data (i.e., "0" vs. "1"). As noted by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2007), tetrachoric correlation coefficients are appropriate to use when examining the association between two (artificial) dichotomous variables. In addition, a varimax (i.e., orthogonal) rotation was employed (Field, 2009), using the following three procedures to determine an appropriate number of factors to retain: eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule (i.e., K1; Kaiser, 1958), scree test (representing a plot of eigenvalues against the factors in descending order; Cattell, 1966; Zwick & Velicer, 1986), and a parallel analysis (involving extracting eigenvalues from random data sets that parallel the actual data set with respect to the sample size and number of variables; Thompson, 2004; Zwick & Velicer, 1982, 1986). These extracted factors yielded meta-themes (Onwuegbuzie, 2003) such that each meta-theme contained one or more of the reference list error themes that emerged in the second stage of the mixed analysis. As described by Onwuegbuzie (2003), the proportion of variance explained by each factor after rotation (i.e., the trace) served as

an effect size index for each meta-theme. Using Constas's (1992) typology, by determining the hierarchical relationship among the reference list themes and identifying the meta-themes, the verification component of categorization was technical, empirical, and rational.

**Stage 4 Analysis**

The fourth stage of the sequential mixed analysis process involved conducting a latent class analysis to ascertain the number of clusters or groups (i.e., latent classes) underlying the reference list error themes. The latent class analysis was conducted under the assumption that the 83 manuscripts could be classified into a small number of distinct clusters known as latent classes based on their profiles of reference list error themes, such that each manuscript belonged to only one cluster. This latent class analysis represented qualitizing of the data, which involves converting numeric data into (qualitative) narrative profiles (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

**Stage 5 Analysis**

The fifth stage of the sequential mixed analysis involved using the inter-respondent matrix to examine the relationship between the reference list error themes and selected variables. Specifically, we conducted the following analyses: (a) a series of correlation analyses to investigate the relationships between the total number of reference list errors and the number of citation errors, number of authors, and length of manuscript; and (b) a multiple linear regression analysis to identify an optimal combination of independent variables (i.e., number of references in the reference list, number of manuscript pages, number of manuscript words, number of authors) that predicted the number of reference list errors. Further, we were interested in conducting a canonical correlation analysis to examine the multivariate relationship between the reference list error themes and selected demographic variables (i.e., gender of the lead author, number of authors, length of manuscript, and size of institution of the lead author). However, because of the relatively small case-to-variable ratio (i.e., 83 cases to 14 reference list error themes and 4 demographic variables), this analysis lacked sufficient statistical power. Also of interest was to examine whether the number of reference list errors predicted the decision made by the editor regarding the suitability of the manuscript for publication. However, because the *Educational Researcher* editors accepted only one of these 83 manuscripts the first time, it was not possible to examine the relationship between the number of reference list errors and the decision made by the editors.

## Results

**Stage 1 Findings**

The classical content analysis (Berelson, 1952) revealed a total of 1,183 reference list errors across the 83 manuscripts, which represented more than 14 reference list errors per manuscript, on average ($M$ = 14.25, $SD$ = 8.05). The number of unique reference list errors per manuscript ranged from 3 to 35, with 83.1% of manuscripts containing more than five unique reference list errors, 60.2% of manuscripts containing more than 10 unique reference list errors, and 24.1% of manuscripts containing more than 20 unique reference list errors. The classical content analysis also led to the identification of a total of 324 unique reference list errors that were identified across these 83 manuscripts. Additionally, this analysis revealed that the prevalence of each of these reference list errors ranged from 0 to 58.

Because of the number of unique reference list errors identified (i.e., $n$ = 324), we decided to deem an error as being significantly common when it occurred a minimum of five occasions. The cut-point of five was used because it represented an endorsement rate of 6%, which translated to a moderate effect size, using Cohen's (1988, pp. 180-183) non-linear arcsine transformation criteria. Interestingly, a total of 60 (18.5%) reference list errors yielded moderate effect sizes (i.e., endorsement rates of five or greater). Table 1 presents the 50 most prevalent reference list errors documented by Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013) and the ranks of these frequencies, as well as the frequencies and ranks pertaining to these reference list errors stemming from the present study. As such, Table 1 provides a direct comparison of the frequencies between Onwuegbuzie and Hwang's (2012, 2013) investigation and the present study. It can be seen from this table that the same two most common reference list errors were the two most frequent errors in both studies. In fact, three of the top four reference list errors yielded identical ranks in both studies, namely: Serial (issue) numbers presented when the page numbers in each volume are continuous; Comma not presented to separate two authors; and Space not presented between initials of each author.

Table 1

*Stage 1 Findings: The 50 Most Prevalent Reference List Errors in Present Study and Onwuegbuzie and Hwang's (2012, 2013) Study and the Corresponding Rank in Present Study*

| Reference List Error | Frequency[1] | Rank[2] | Frequency[3] | Rank[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Serial (issue) numbers presented when the page numbers in each volume are continuous | 102 | 1 | 58 | 1 |
| Comma not presented to separate two authors | 56 | 2 | 48 | 2 |
| Superscripts inappropriately used when providing edition number | 53 | 3 | 33 | 6 |
| Space not presented between initials of each author | 49 | 4 | 38 | 4 |
| Period not presented after the author's name (when the author does not represent a person but an organization) and before the publication year | 37 | 5 | 19 | 13 |
| Website inappropriately underlined | 34 | 6 | 23 | 9 |
| Month not given for a paper presentation | 31 | 7 | 10 | 30 |
| "Publications" or "Publications Inc" inappropriately presented when listing the publisher | 30 | 8 | 13 | 20 |
| Reference list not double spaced | 28 | 9 | 36 | 5 |
| Citations not presented in alphabetical order | 27 | 10 | 11 | 28 |
| Title of journal article inappropriately capitalized | 27 | 10 | 39 | 3 |
| Comma not presented after retrieval year of Internal source | 25 | 12 | 21 | 12 |
| Volume number not italicized | 24 | 13 | 26 | 7 |
| "Inc" inappropriately presented when listing the publisher | 21 | 14 | 13 | 20 |
| Title of book inappropriately capitalized | 20 | 15 | 15 | 16 |
| "&" not used to separate the last two authors | 18 | 16 | 9 | 34 |
| Reference heading is bolded | 18 | 16 | 25 | 8 |
| Retrieval date not provided for web-based citations | 18 | 16 | 13 | 20 |
| First letter of the second-part of the title not capitalized | 18 | 16 | 14 | 19 |
| Title of edited books inappropriately capitalized | 17 | 20 | 9 | 34 |

| Reference List Error | Frequency[1] | Rank[2] | Frequency[3] | Rank[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Title of journal not italicized | 16 | 21 | 3 | 89 |
| Space not presented to separate initials of each editor of an edited book | 15 | 22 | 15 | 16 |
| "And" instead of "&" to separate the last two authors | 14 | 23 | 13 | 20 |
| City, state, and/or publisher not always provided | 14 | 23 | 11 | 28 |
| Title of book not always italicized | 14 | 23 | 5 | 55 |
| Period inappropriately appears after the numbers of ERIC | 14 | 23 | 1 | 236 |
| Page number of book chapters not presented after the title of the book | 12 | 27 | 23 | 9 |
| Space not presented between pp and the page number | 12 | 27 | 4 | 69 |
| Page number of journal articles not presented | 12 | 27 | 7 | 37 |
| Initials of all authors not presented | 11 | 30 | 3 | 89 |
| State pertaining to the publisher not abbreviated | 11 | 30 | 2 | 124 |
| Reference heading represented by all uppercase text | 11 | 30 | 10 | 30 |
| Serial number not presented when discontinuous when the page numbers in each volume are not continuous | 11 | 30 | 6 | 38 |
| Volume number of journal article not provided | 11 | 30 | 12 | 25 |
| Comma not presented to separate the last two authors of a reference (when references have more than two authors) | 10 | 35 | 10 | 30 |
| Period not presented after an author's initial | 10 | 35 | 18 | 15 |
| Volume number of journal (periodicals) not italicized | 10 | 35 | 22 | 11 |
| Abbreviation (of authors) inappropriately included | 9 | 38 | 1 | 236 |
| Citations not presented in chronological order | 9 | 38 | 8 | 36 |
| Title of paper presentation not italicized | 9 | 38 | 0 | 323 |
| Period inappropriately presented at the end of the reference (e.g., when the reference ends with a website address) | 9 | 38 | 0 | 323 |

| Reference List Error | Frequency[1] | Rank[2] | Frequency[3] | Rank[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Title of edited book not italicized | 9 | 38 | 2 | 124 |
| Title of journal article inappropriately italicized | 9 | 38 | 1 | 236 |
| Period not presented at the end of reference | 8 | 44 | 19 | 13 |
| Reference list does not begin on a separate page | 8 | 44 | 12 | 25 |
| Comma inappropriately appears between initials of some authors | 8 | 44 | 15 | 16 |
| State of publisher not provided | 8 | 44 | 12 | 25 |
| "And" instead of "&" used to separate the editors of edited books | 8 | 44 | 10 | 29 |
| Space inappropriately appears between six numbers of an ERIC | 8 | 44 | 1 | 236 |
| Space inappropriately appears between volume number and series number of a periodical | 8 | 44 | 13 | 20 |

[1] Represents data from Onwuegbuzie and Hwang's (2012, 2013) study; Frequencies between 8 and 21 represent moderate effect sizes; frequencies greater than 22 represent large effect sizes, using Cohen's (1988, pp. 180-183) non-linear arcsine transformation criteria.
[2] Represents data from Onwuegbuzie and Hwang's (2012, 2013) study
[3] Represents data from the present study; Frequencies between 5 and 13 represent moderate effect sizes; frequencies greater than 13 represent large effect sizes, using Cohen's (1988, pp. 180-183) non-linear arcsine transformation criteria.
[4] Represents data from the present study

**Stage 2 Findings**

A constant comparison analysis of these 324 reference list errors yielded the following 14 reference list error themes: (a) General errors; (b) Reference heading, (c) Names of authors, (d) Publication year/date, (e) Title of work, (f) Publisher information, (g) Source of journal/periodical, (h) Source of authored book, (i) Source of edited book, (j) Source of website, (k) Source of paper presentation, (l) Source of dissertation/thesis, (m) Source of newspaper article, and (n) Source of government document. These reference list error themes were identical to the ones identified by Onwuegbuzie and Hwang (2012, 2013). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics regarding the number of reference list errors for each of the 14 citation error themes. It can be seen from this table that reference list errors associated with the Source of journal/periodical represented the most prevalent errors, followed by reference list errors associated with Names of authors.

**Stage 3 Findings**

With regard to the number of factors underlying the 14 emergent reference list error themes extracted in Stage 2, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was greater than .5 (i.e., KMO = .51) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($X^2[91] = 128.45$, $df = 91$, $p = .006$), thereby justifying conducting a principal component analysis. Both the eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule (i.e., K1; Kaiser, 1958) and scree test indicated that four factors (i.e., meta-themes) should be retained. A parallel analysis verified the K1 and scree test (Zwick & Velicer, 1982, 1986) for the current data of 83 manuscripts and 14 variables (i.e., reference list error themes). Specifically, a series of (i.e., $n = 1,000$) random data matrices of size 83 x 14 was generated, and eigenvalues were computed for the correlation matrices for the original data and for each of the 1,000 random data sets. Next, the eigenvalues derived from the actual data were compared to the eigenvalues derived from the

random data for the purpose of identifying the number of components that accounted for more variance than did the components obtained from random data. Consistent with the K1 and scree test, the parallel analysis suggested retaining four factors.

Table 3 presents this four-factor principal components solution. Using a cutoff correlation of 0.3 recommended by Lambert and Durand (1975) as an acceptable lower bound for pattern/structure coefficients, it can be seen from Table 3 that three reference list error themes had pattern/structure coefficients with large effect sizes on the first factor: (a) Source of edited book, (b) Names of authors, and (c) Source of authored book. It should be noted that in addition to having a pattern/structure coefficient with a large effect size on Factor 1, Source of authored book also had a significant but smaller pattern/structure coefficient on Factor 4 (i.e., cross-loading). Further, the following four reference list error themes had pattern/structure coefficients with large effect sizes on the second factor: (a) Source of website, (b) Publication year/date, (c) Source of newspaper article, and (d) Title of work. Interestingly, in addition to having a pattern/structure coefficient with a large effect size on Factor 2, Source of newspaper article also had a significant but smaller pattern/structure coefficient on Factor 4, and Title of work also had a significant but smaller pattern/structure coefficient on Factor 1 (i.e., cross-loadings). Furthermore, the following four reference list error themes had pattern/structure coefficients with large effect sizes on the third factor: (a) Source of dissertation/thesis, (b) Source of government document, (c) Source of paper presentation, and (d) Reference heading. In addition to having a pattern/structure coefficient with a large effect size on Factor 3, Source of paper presentation also had a significant but smaller pattern/structure coefficient on Factor 2 (i.e., cross-loading). Finally, three reference list error themes emerged that had pattern/structure coefficients with large effect sizes on the fourth factor: (a) Publisher information, (b) General errors, and (b) Source of journal/periodical. In addition to having a pattern/structure coefficient with a large effect size on Factor 4, Reference heading also had a significant but smaller pattern/structure coefficient on Factor 3 (i.e., cross-loading).

Table 2

*Stage 2 Findings: Prevalence Rates of Themes Emerging from Reference List Errors for Manuscripts Submitted to Educational Researcher*

| Reference List Error Theme | Total Number of Unique Reference List Errors Contained in Theme | Total Number of Reference List Errors Contained in Theme | Average incidence of reference list errors per manuscript (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Source of journal/periodical | 65 | 233 | 96.4 |
| Names of authors | 39 | 209 | 83.1 |
| General errors | 19 | 92 | 68.7 |
| Source of edited book | 43 | 149 | 63.9 |
| Source of authored book | 27 | 85 | 62.7 |
| Reference heading | 13 | 78 | 62.7 |
| Title of work | 19 | 81 | 59.0 |
| Source of website | 23 | 86 | 51.8 |
| Publisher information | 24 | 69 | 48.2 |
| Publication year/date | 22 | 42 | 41.0 |
| Source of paper presentation | 22 | 48 | 27.7 |
| Source of government document | 5 | 5 | 6.0 |
| Source of newspaper article | 1 | 4 | 4.8 |
| Source of dissertation/thesis | 2 | 2 | 2.4 |

Table 3

*Stage 3 Findings: Summary of Themes and Factor Pattern/Structure Coefficients from Principal Component Analysis (Varimax): Four-Factor Solution*

| | Factor Coefficients[1] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Communality Coefficient |
| Source of edited book | **.77** | .05 | .02 | -.10 | .61 |
| Names of authors | **.68** | .10 | .10 | -.20 | .52 |
| Source of authored book | **.64** | -.04 | .02 | **.43** | .60 |
| Source of website | -.09 | **.63** | -.09 | .09 | .42 |
| Publication year/date | .17 | **.62** | .12 | .19 | .46 |
| Source of newspaper article | -.01 | **.61** | -.12 | **-.37** | .52 |
| Title of work | **.40** | **.54** | .20 | .21 | .54 |
| Source of dissertation/thesis | .07 | .01 | **.73** | .01 | .54 |
| Source of government document | .06 | -.11 | **.72** | -.10 | .54 |
| Source of paper presentation | -.02 | **-.31** | **.55** | .28 | .48 |
| Reference heading | -.03 | .06 | **-.39** | **.34** | .27 |
| Publisher information | .18 | -.10 | -.11 | **.75** | .61 |
| General errors | -.20 | .17 | -.09 | **.40** | .24 |
| Source of journal/periodical | -.11 | .16 | .14 | **.38** | .20 |
| Trace | 1.76 | 1.63 | 1.63 | 1.52 | 6.54 |
| % variance explained | 12.57 | 11.65 | 11.65 | 10.82 | 46.70 |

[1]Coefficients in bold represent pattern/structure coefficients with the largest effect size within each theme using a cut-off value of 0.3 recommended by Lambert and Durand (1975).

The first meta-theme (i.e., Factor 1) was labeled *Author and Book* and explained 12.57% of the total variance; the second meta-theme (i.e., Factor 2) was labeled: *Website, Year, Newspaper, and Title* and explained 11.65% of the total variance; the third meta-theme (i.e., Factor 3) was labeled: *Dissertation/Thesis, Government, Paper Presentation, and Heading* and explained 11.65 of the total variance; and the fourth meta-theme (i.e., Factor 4) was labeled *Publisher Information, Miscellaneous Errors,* and *Journal* and explained 10.82% of the total variance. These four meta-themes combined accounted for 46.70% of the total variance, which using the findings of Henson, Capraro, and Capraro (2004) and Henson and Roberts (2006), represents a large effect size.

The manifest effect size—(i.e., actual reference list error rate per meta-theme) associated with the four meta-themes was as follows: (a) *Author and Book* (91.6%), (b) *Website, Year, Newspaper, and Title* (79.5%), (c) *Dissertation/Thesis, Government, Paper Presentation, and Heading* (74.7%), and (d) *Publisher Information, Miscellaneous Errors,* and *Journal* (98.8%). Figure 1 displays the thematic structure (i.e., relationships among the reference list error themes and the reference list error meta-themes), including the manifest effect sizes and latent effect sizes. This figure represents a crossover visual representation (Onwuegbuzie & Dickinson, 2008), which depicts the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings within the same display.

**Stage 4 Findings**

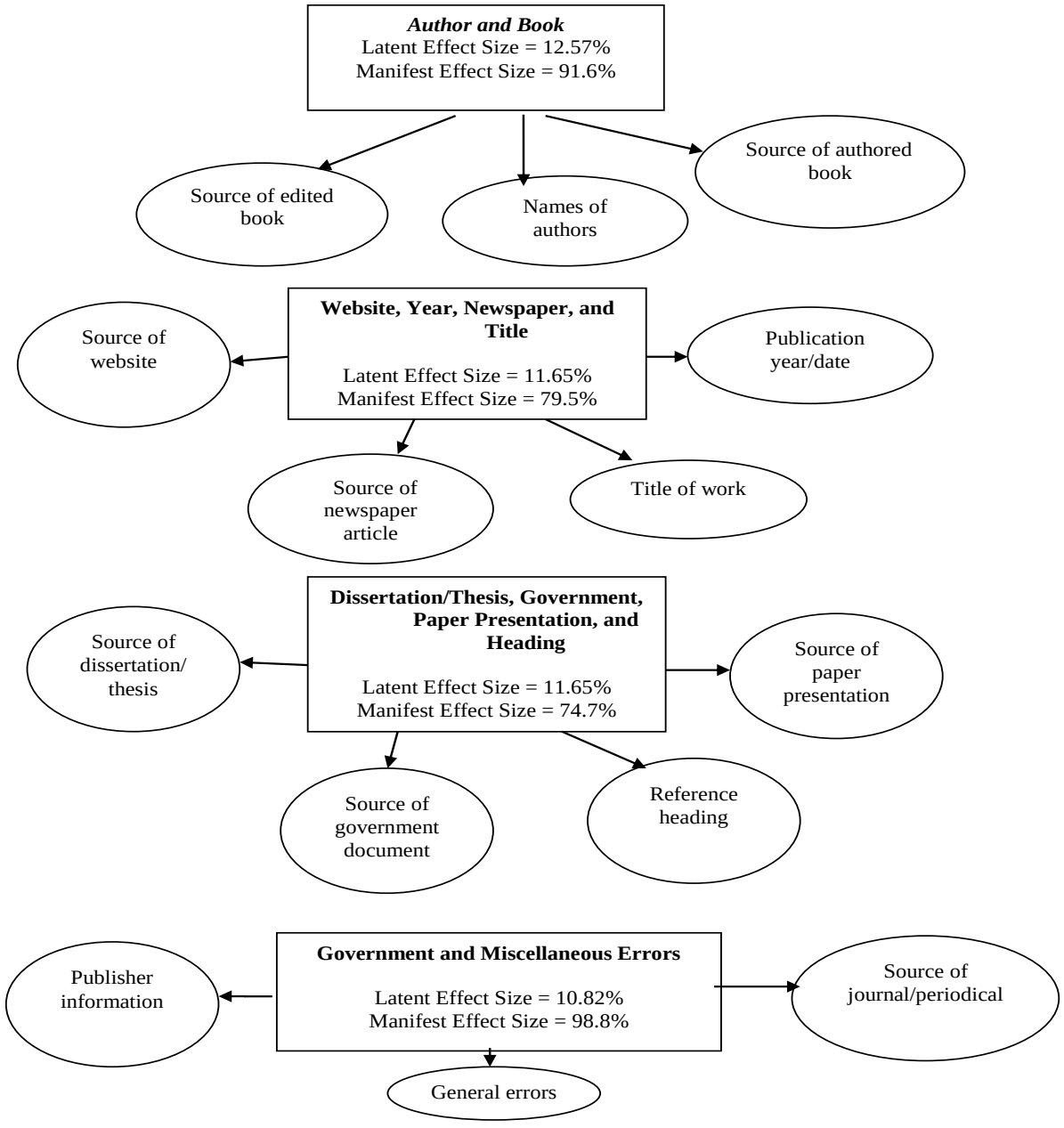
A latent class analysis was conducted to determine the smallest number of clusters (i.e., latent classes) that explains all the relationships among select reference list error themes under the assumption that manuscripts could be classified into a small number of distinct clusters known as latent classes depending on their profiles of the select reference list errors, such that each manuscript belonged to only one cluster. We decided to conduct the latent class analysis on the six most common error themes because for all of these themes, at least 60% of the authors made reference list errors that were classified under these themes—namely, Source of journal/periodical, Names of authors, General errors, Source of edited

book, Source of authored book, and Reference heading, respectively.

Our latent class analysis of the six reference list error themes revealed a two-cluster solution ($L^2$ = 39.07, $df$ = 50, $p$ = .87, Bootstrap $p$ = .13). Figure 2 displays these two distinct groups of manuscripts. It can be seen from Figure 2 that Cluster 1 (comprising 66.0% of manuscripts) was relatively high with respect to all six reference list error themes, whereas Cluster 2 (comprising 34.0% of manuscripts) was high on General errors, Names of authors, Reference heading, and Source of journal/periodical, but relatively low on Source of authored book and Source of edited book.

Figure Caption

*Figure 1*. Stage 3 Findings: Thematic structure pertaining to reference list error themes and meta-themes.



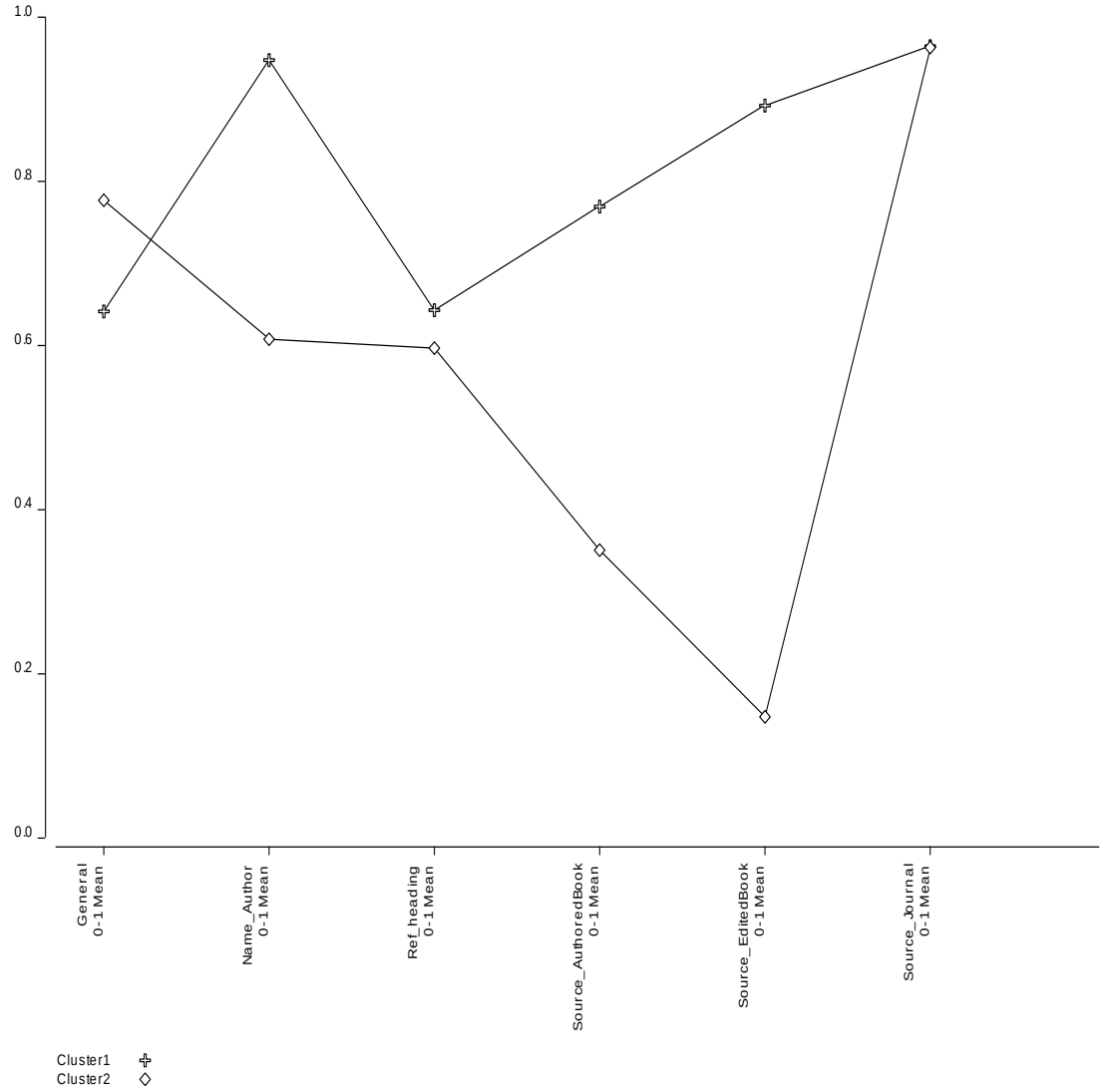



*Figure 2*. Stage 4 Findings: Profiles of the manuscripts with respect to the reference list error themes.

**Stage 5 Findings**

**Correlation analysis**. A series (i.e., $n = 6$) of correlations was conducted to assess the relationship between the number of reference list errors and an array of reference list error variables, namely, the total number of reference list errors, and the following five components identified by Onwuegbuzie, Frels, and Slate (2010): Not in Reference List, Not Consistent with Reference List, Not in Text, Incomplete or Incorrect Citation, and Incomplete or Incorrect Reference. According to Onwuegbuzie and Daniel (2002), variables for which either the standardized skewness coefficient (i.e., skewness coefficient divided by its standard error) or the standardized kurtosis coefficient (i.e., kurtosis coefficient divided by its standard error), or both, are outside the ∀3 range suggest extreme departure from normality. An examination of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients pertaining to the six reference list error variables revealed a serious departure from normality for all six reference list error variables, with all these variables indicating distributions that were positively skewed and leptokurtic (i.e., overly peaked shape). Thus, a nonparametric correlation, namely, Spearman's rank, was used to examine these six sets of relationships. After applying the Bonferroni adjustment to control for the inflation of Type I error (i.e., adjusted $\alpha = .05/6 = .00833$), the Spearman's rank correlations revealed that the number of reference list errors was statistically significantly and positively related to five of the six reference list error variables, namely: total number of reference list errors ($r_s[83] = .59$, $p < .001$), Not in Reference List ($r_s[83] = .39$, $p < .001$), Not Consistent with Reference List ($r_s[83] = .48$, $p < .001$), Not in Text ($r_s[83] = .42$, $p < .001$), and Incomplete or Incorrect Reference ($r_s[83] = .38$, $p < .001$). All these relationships were large (Cohen, 1988). The only statistically non-significant

relationship was that between the number of reference list errors and reference list errors pertaining to Incomplete or Incorrect Citation ($r_s[83] = .13$, $p = .266$).

Further, a series (i.e., $n = 4$) of nonparametric (i.e., Spearman) correlations, after applying the Bonferroni adjustment to control for the inflation of Type I error, revealed that the number of reference list errors was statistically significantly related to the number of references in the reference list ($r_s[83] = .27$, $p = .016$). Using Cohen's (1988) criteria, this relationship was moderate. However, no statistically significant relationship was observed between the number of reference list errors and the number of manuscript pages ($r_s[83] = .17$, $p = .12$), the number of manuscript words ($r_s[83] = .21$, $p = .06$), and the number of authors ($r_s[83] = .17$, $p = .19$).

**Multiple regression analysis**. An *all possible subsets* (APS) multiple linear regression (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003; Thompson 1995) was used to identify an optimal combination of the four independent variables (i.e., number of references in the reference list, number of manuscript pages, number of manuscript words, number of authors) that predicted the number of reference list errors. This analysis, which has been advocated by many statisticians (e.g., Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003; Thompson 1995), involved examining all possible models containing some or all of the four independent variables. When using this analytical technique, separate regression analyses are conducted for the one possible set of four independent variables, all four possible trios of independent variables, all six possible pairs of independent variables, and all four independent variables singly—yielding the fitting of 15 multiple regression models. These 15 models then were compared to identify the best subset of independent variables using the following two criteria: (a) the maximum proportion of variance explained ($R^2$) and (b) Mallow's $C_p$ (Myers, 1986; Sen & Srivastava, 1990). The APS multiple regression analysis revealed that a model containing one variable provided the best fit to these data. In fact, the four-variable model (i.e., adding the remaining three independent variables) only increased the proportion of variance explained by 3.5%. In addition, Mallow's $C_p$ was closer in value to the number of regressor variables (Myers, 1986; Sen & Srivastava, 1990) with the one-variable solution than with any other variable solution.

The selected model indicated that the following variable contributed significantly ($F[1, 82] = 4.53$, $p < .05$) to the prediction of the number of reference list errors: the number of authors. This variable explained 6.8% of the variation in the number of reference list errors (Adjusted $R^2 =$ 5.3%). Using Cohen's (1988) criteria for assessing the predictive power of a set of independent variables in a multiple regression model, the proportion of variance explained indicates a small effect size, because it lay between 2% and 12.99%.

With respect to the assumptions for the selected one-variable linear regression model, the Durbin-Watson coefficient of 1.90 was sufficiently close to 2.00 to suggest that for any two observations, the residual terms were uncorrelated (i.e., lack of autocorrelation), which was a desirable outcome. In addition, an examination of the standardized residuals pertaining to each of the participants revealed that no manuscript had a standardized residual that exceeded 2.00. Thus, in summary, the selected final regression model suggested that the manuscripts with the most citation errors tended to have the highest number of authors. The regression equation was as follows:

Number of Reference List Errors = 10.69 + 2.40 * Number of Authors

This equation indicated that among manuscripts submitted to *Educational Researcher*, every additional author of a manuscript was associated with an increase of 2.40 reference list errors, on average.

## Discussion of Findings

Our current editorial provides further compelling evidence that APA-related reference list errors are very common among manuscripts initially submitted to journals for consideration for publication. More specifically, the present findings indicate that not only do reference list errors permeate manuscripts that are submitted to *RITS* but also they similarly pervade manuscripts that are submitted to the foremost journal in education, namely, *Educational Researcher*. And, our experience as editors of *Educational Researcher* led us to conclude that a high proportion of authors who submit manuscripts to *Educational Researcher* are among the most prolific of authors in the world. Thus, our present editorial has led us to conclude that reference list errors are not only committed by beginning authors, but also they are being committed by prolific authors—thereby supporting the hypothesis that journals with the highest impact factors also have manuscripts submitted to their journals that have high rates of reference list errors. In fact, the characteristics of reference list errors for both the *Educational Researcher* manuscripts and *RITS* manuscripts were very similar, including the distributions of the 14 reference list error themes. Other similarities in the findings pertaining

to the *RITS* authors and *Educational Researcher* authors include the mean number of reference list errors per manuscript ($M$ = 12.83 vs. $M$ = 14.25, respectively) and the frequency rate of the reference list errors. With respect to the latter, from Table 1, the relationship between the frequencies of the 50 themes relating to the two studies was statistically significant and large for both the raw frequencies ($r$ = .80, $p$ < .001) and the frequency ranks ($r_s$ = .56, $p$ < .001), with three of the top four reference list errors yielding identical ranks in both studies.

As was the case for the *RITS* authors, not a single author had an error-free reference list, with the smallest number of unique reference list errors being three. Also, it should be noted that the mean number of reference list errors of 14.25 among *Educational Researcher* authors likely represents a lower bound when one takes into account that these manuscripts were submitted before the writers of sixth edition of APA required authors to include digital object identifiers (DOIs) whenever they are available (cf. section 6.31). As explained by the writers of the sixth edition of [APA] *Publication Manual*, DOI numbers represent unique numbers assigned by the publisher for electronic referencing of published journal articles and other documents. Accordingly, in reference lists, authors should place the DOI at the end of the reference. Thus, under the sixth edition of APA, failure to include available DOI numbers represents a reference list error—specifically, a reference list error pertaining to Source of journal/periodical. Moreover, when we take into account the fact that the 83 *Educational Researcher* manuscripts represented those manuscripts that were sent out for external review, it is reasonable to conclude that this 14.25 mean number of reference list errors is even more of a lower bound. Further, this mean number of reference list errors is even more of a lower bound when we take into account the fact that we only assessed reference list errors with respect to violations to APA, and did not assess reference list errors by comparing each reference contained in the reference list to the original work, as has many researchers across numerous fields and disciplines (e.g., business, economics, social work, psychology, medicine, library information science; cf. Adhikari & Bhandari, 2011; de Lacey, Record, & Wade, 1985; Doms, 1988; Eichorn & Yankauer, 1987; Faunce & Job, 2001; Gatten, 2010; Gosling, Cameron, & Gibbons, 2004; Hernon & Metoyer-Duran, 1992; Holt, Siebers, Suder, Loan, & Jeffery, 2000; Kristof, 1997; Ngan Kee, Roach, & Lau, 1997; Nishina, Asano, Mikawa, Maekawa, & Obara, 1995; O'Connor, 2002; O'Connor & Kristof, 2001; Roach, Lau, & Ngan Kee, 1997; Siebers, 2000; Siebers & Holt, 2000; Spivey & Wilks, 2004; White, 1987)—leading to reference list errors that have ranged from 4.1% to 66.7% (Onwuegbuzie, 2012).

The statistically significant and moderate relationship between the number of reference list errors and the number of references in the reference list, although not surprising, suggests that authors who write manuscripts that contain many citations—and hence contain longer reference lists—should be especially careful when compiling their reference list. An extremely disturbing finding is that manuscripts submitted to *Educational Researcher* that involve more co-authors tend to exhibit more reference list error themes. This finding, which replicates the finding of Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al. (2011) and echoes the positive relationship between the number of authors and the number of citation errors documented by Onwuegbuzie, Frels, et al. (2010) and Onwuegbuzie, Combs, Frels, and Slate (2011)—again suggests that the bystander effect likely prevails (Darley & Latané, 1968; Hudson & Bruckman, 2004; Levine & Thompson, 2004). That is, when manuscripts are written by multiple authors, some, if not all, authors assume that one or more of their other co-authors will/have checked the in-text citations and the reference list carefully and/or they believe that one or more of their other co-authors are more qualified to check the in-text citations and the reference list and thus their contribution in this area is not needed (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, et al., 2010). Thus, our series of editorials on citation errors and reference list errors clearly indicate that for manuscripts that involve multiple authors, all co-authors should be aware of the potential pitfalls stemming from the bystander effect and attempt to maximize the communication channels among all members of the authorship team.

## Conclusions

Our series of articles and editorials in the area of APA errors of omission and commission make it clear that the vast majority of authors who submit manuscripts to journals commit an unnecessarily large number of APA errors at all components of an article, including the abstract (Hahs-Vaughn, Onwuegbuzie, Slate, & Frels, 2009) and body of the manuscript (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Combs, Slate, & Frels, 2010). Thus, in these works, we provided tools and strategies that we hope will help authors minimize these APA errors in the future. However, our most recent articles and editorials on citation errors (Onwuegbuzie, Combs, et al., 2011; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, et al., 2010) and reference list errors (Onwuegbuzie & Hwang, 2012, 2013; Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al., 2011), including the present editorial, have demonstrated that authors also commit an unnecessarily large number of APA

errors in their reference lists. And, just as authors who commit in-text APA errors are significantly more likely to have their manuscripts rejected for publication by editors, so too are authors who commit reference list errors significantly more likely to have their manuscripts rejected (Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al., 2011). Yet, avoiding reference list errors is not just merely a quality issue, it is, even more importantly, also an ethical one, wherein *all* authors should make every attempt to document *all* their sources accurately and fully. Various professionals at the college level (e.g., instructors, mentors, advisors, thesis/dissertation committee members, chairs/supervisors) and beyond (e.g., journal editors, publishers, and writers of future editions of the APA Publication Manuals) can play an important role in promoting what Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al. (2011) referred to as a "culture of reference lists that are minimally error free" (p. xiv). Onwuegbuzie, Combs, et al. (2010), Onwuegbuzie, Hwang, et al. (2011), and Onwuegbuzie, Frels, et al. (2010) have discussed several ways in which these personnel can assist, as well as have provided tools and strategies (e.g., using Table 1 and Table 2 presented in the current editorial as starting points by focusing on these most common types of reference list errors and reference list error themes, respectively) to help students, researchers, and experienced scholars prevent making reference list errors. Whatever strategies are used, we hope that the efficacy of these strategies is monitored, documented, and disseminated by those persons using them—as was undertaken in the aforementioned series of articles and editorials—so that we can all learn from their findings.

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