Clinical Research Paper
Abstracts

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School of Social Work
The College of St. Catherine
and
University of St. Thomas

Saint Paul, Minnesota
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The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse on Men and Their Adult Intimate Relationships ........................... 107
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How Gay Christians Integrate Their Sexuality and Spirituality

by Ross Allen Aalgaard, M.Div.

Research Committee        Co-Chairs: Mike Chovanec, Ph.D. & Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Dottie Brown, M.S.W., L.G.S.W.
          Dennis Christian, M.S.W., L.I.C.S.W., D.C.S.W.

Abstract
Gay Christians have encountered negative messages about their sexual orientation and their spirituality from unwelcoming Christian teachings. However, many gay Christians have integrated their sexuality and spirituality by claiming their homosexual identity and their religious identity rather than abandoning them. Eight participants, five gay men and three lesbians, answered questions about their sexuality and spirituality in a semi-structured interview, revealing how they were empowered to integrate their identities. Integration of sexuality and spirituality occurs through a process of recognizing there is more than one Christian viewpoint regarding homosexuality, being aware of the spirituality the gay person possesses, building self-acceptance, gaining social supports, reconstructing theological concepts, and negotiating identities. In addition, the process is often impacted by pivotal life events and personal reading or research. Social workers may want to assist gay clients with self-acceptance, finding social support, reflecting on pivotal life events to aid in creating meaning, and finding useful reading materials for personal study to guide gay Christians in integrating their sexuality and spirituality. Social workers who design an environment which empowers, shows empathy, and expresses unconditional positive regard for gay clients will create a safe setting for their integration process.
Collaboration Efforts of School Social Workers and Teachers To Successfully Mainstream Children with Asperger Syndrome

by Christine M. Anderson

Research Committee:  
Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D., LISW  
Members: Amy Carroll, MSW, LGSW  
Krista Nelson, LICSW, LMFT

Abstract

A qualitative study of two school social workers and two regular education teachers who have worked with children with Asperger syndrome was conducted. The school brings forth a collaborative team consisting of professionals that come from differing educational backgrounds that add to the team. In order to find how this collaborative team collaborates in the intervention process of children with Asperger syndrome, a semi-structured interview was created and conducted based on a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The findings showed that the team did collaborate on significant behavior problems within the school, but improvements could be made in the areas of communication, competency, and flexibility. Collaborative models, as well as further education on Asperger syndrome awareness will be explored. Finally, implications for social work practice, policy, and research will be discussed.
Secondary Traumatic Stress

by Jessica Andrich, LSW

Research Committee:

Chair: Edwin Bonnie, Ph.D.
Members: Jennifer Goerger, LGSW
Michael Mathies, LICSW

Abstract

Secondary traumatic stress and its effects on social workers is a fairly new topic of study in the field of social work though it has affected those working with trauma for decades. This research project focused on the definition and risk factors for secondary traumatic stress on social workers. Secondary traumatic stress has been defined as the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other or from helping or wanting to help a traumatized person. Using a quantitative design, 250 surveys were mailed out to social workers licensed by the Minnesota Board of Social Work. The mailing included a set of demographic questions as well as the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS). 72 social workers responded to the survey. Two questions were addressed by this study: Was there a relationship between age and the severity of symptoms reported on the STSS? Was there a relationship between years of social work experience and the severity of symptoms reported on the STSS? The findings indicated there was not a significant relationship between age and experience and the severity of symptoms reported on the STSS. This study highlights the need to continue researching the negative effects of working with trauma survivors on social workers. This study also reveals the importance of educating new and current social workers on the risks of working with traumatized individuals.
The Elderly Waiver Program and Informal Caregiving in Minnesota: A Social Work Perspective

by Sarah C. Balik

Research Committee:
Chair: David J. Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Rochelle E. Rottenberg, MSW, LISW
Beth C. Wiggins, MSW, LISW

Abstract
The Medicaid Home & Community-Based Services (HCBS) program provides older adults who meet income and asset guidelines with cost-effective and comprehensive long-term care services in the community. In Minnesota, a HCBS program is termed the Elderly Waiver. This study was a quantitative secondary analysis of the 2007 Elderly Waiver Consumer Experience Survey administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This research analyzed the consumer experience with the EW program and the interaction between informal and formal care. The ecological model was the conceptual framework used in this study. It was essential to see whether informal caregiving and formal programs are able to satisfactorily meet the diverse needs of the participants. The data indicated that the presence of an informal caregiver positively impacts the experience of individuals in the EW program. Also, informal caregiving and formal programs work together to meet the diverse needs of the respondents. The data was compared to previous research and implications for the field of social work are discussed.
Intimacy in nursing homes: Social workers’ perspectives and perceived roles.

by Gina M. Ball

Abstract

To date, there has been little research exploring the role of social workers in addressing intimacy among residents in nursing home settings. The present study explores the perceived roles of nursing home social workers in addressing intimacy needs among residents as well as their attitudes about sexuality and aging. Using a primarily quantitative design that also generated some qualitative data, 32 Minnesota nursing home social workers were surveyed. Respondents were asked about the characteristics of their facilities such as policies and procedures regarding training and accommodations for intimacy needs of residents. The role of social workers in addressing intimacy and their attitudes about sexuality of older adults were also addressed. The findings indicate that the nursing home social workers do consider addressing intimacy to be part of their role and consider intimacy to be a basic right of all residents. However, most of the respondents did not include intimacy in psychosocial assessments and typically did not initiate conversation with residents about intimacy. These findings point to the need for more education for social workers on the importance of how to routinely incorporate this psychosocial need into their assessments and work more proactively with residents to ensure that all of their psychosocial needs are addressed.
Impact of a Disrupted Adoption from the Perspective of the Assigned Case Worker

by Rebecca Bast

Research Committee:  Co-Chairs:  Ed Bonnie, Ph.D, L.P., LMFT
Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Melissa Bowe, MS, CAPSW
Andrea Hoffman-Vosburgh, MSW, CAPSW

Abstract
An adoption is intended to be a permanent placement for a child; however, there are situations when permanence is not achieved. An adoption disruption is defined as an adoption process that ends after the child is placed in an adoptive home and before the adoption is legally finalized (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2004). The purpose of this study was to gather information from the perspective of adoption professionals regarding the impact of disrupted adoptions. The researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of how disrupted adoptions impact the adopted child, adoptive family and the social worker who was assigned to the case, as well as, to learn more about the coping strategies the three groups use when dealing with a disrupted adoption. Using a qualitative design, seven social work professionals were interviewed. The findings indicated that the impact of a disrupted adoption is overwhelmingly negative, and the majority of coping strategies used were primarily detrimental. This research illustrates the need to help families and children develop more effective positive coping strategies as well as the need to for agencies to implement more effective post placement services.
Mindfulness and individual psychotherapy: Therapists’ perspectives

by Lisa M. Bauer

Research Committee: Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Jil Leverone, Ph.D.
Merra Young, MSW, LICSW, LMFT

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to examine how therapists bring mindfulness to their clinical practice, through their own use of mindfulness and in their work with clients. Five licensed psychotherapists who practice mindfulness meditation participated in qualitative interviews. A content analysis indicated first, that some therapists teach mindfulness to their clients through breath and body awareness and through helping them develop an observing self. Second, being mindful is more than a technique; the therapist’s own mindfulness practice helps the therapist be open, non-judgmental, trusting in the client’s process, and fully present. Third, spirituality and mindfulness meditation practices are often intertwined for the developing individual and psychotherapist. Implications for the study are discussed in terms of expanding education on mindfulness practice as it relates to social work theory, specifically attachment theory and mentalization.
Treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Victims of Sexual Violence

by Nicole Beach

Research Committee:  
Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW  
Members: Kathy Caron, MSW, LICSW  
Julie Kapsch, BS

Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to explore treatment options for victims of sexual violence diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and to gather information from clinicians regarding what factors influence treatment planning for this population. Using a quantitative research design, data was gathered through the use of a cross-sectional survey administered to members of the Minnesota Clinical Society of Social Workers. The survey collected information as to whether or not therapists account for differences in client demographics and trauma histories when choosing their treatment approach, what treatments they are using, as well as what treatment outcomes their clients are experiencing. The key findings from the study strongly support the need to individualize treatment based on client demographics and trauma history. Despite this, the majority of clinicians surveyed report that on average only about 57% of the clients they treat from this population no longer meet criteria for PTSD at the end of therapy.
School Social Worker’s Awareness of Adolescent Cyberbullying

by William B. Bedford

Research Committee
Members: Alison Feigh, BA
Deirdra Yarbro, LICSW

Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.

Abstract

Bullying occurrences are not a new phenomenon in the lives of adolescents. However, in recent years bullying has taken a new form through the growth of technology. This new type of bullying is referred to as cyberbullying. The purpose of this project was to discover the awareness levels of school social workers in the state of Minnesota to cyberbullying occurrences, as well as to identify effective interventions, both preventative and reactionary. Using a quantitative design, 41 school social workers in the state of Minnesota completed a questionnaire concerning their awareness to occurrences of cyberbullying. The findings indicated that the majority of respondents were aware of cyberbullying occurrences, though those working primarily with junior and senior high students had a higher level of awareness than those working primarily with elementary aged students. Successful preventative and reactionary interventions attempted varied among the respondents. Though the majority of respondents were aware of cyberbullying among their students, many were unsure of how to address this growing issue.
Graduate Social Work Curriculum: Program Concentration and Employment Outcomes

by Bethany Bertsch and Mindy Voelker

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph. D.
Members: George Baboila, MSW, LICSW
Kimberly White, MA, LICSW

Abstract
This research is an examination of graduate Master of Social Work programs and employment outcomes following the completion of the degree. Our research addresses the question of whether respondents who attend graduate programs that have a particular concentration, go on to be employed in a field with that particular focus. This research also provided information regarding respondents’ views on what programs could offer to better prepare students for work in the field. The study was conducted via a mailed survey, was exploratory and a qualitative study. Questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 300 respondents from a roster of the members of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. One hundred forty three questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 48 percent. Descriptive statistics were obtained from demographic data, and further data analysis was conducted via Minitab 15 utilizing the chi square statistic. The results show that there is an association between program concentration and employment outcomes; and the particular graduate program respondents attended, also affected their options for electives.
Social Worker Age: Implications for Autistic Children

by Amy L. Bestland

Research Committee: Chair: Ed Bonnie Ph.D., LP; LMFT
Members: Linda Lorentz-Dockter, LGSW
Lisa Bolton, MSW

Abstract

The purpose of the research was to determine whether the age of a social worker impacts the ability to identify the age when autism was fully present, characteristics of autism, the causes of autism and treatments that were helpful for children with autism. One hundred Minnesota social worker names and addresses were obtained from the Minnesota Board of Social Work. Twenty five licensed social workers, twenty five licensed graduate social workers, twenty five licensed independent social workers and twenty five licensed independent clinical workers were asked to complete a web based survey. The survey resulted in responses from eighteen social workers. Findings from the participants suggested that age does have implications for identification of the age when autism was fully present, characteristics of autism, causes of autism and treatment identification. Social workers forty-one and older incorrectly identified the age when autism was fully present. Social workers twenty-one through forty years old had a tendency to be confused about the characteristics, diagnostic criterion and causes of autism. Finally, social workers were not familiar with treatment approaches that could benefit the autistic child.
Ambiguous Loss in Parents of Children with Autism: The Professional’s Perspective

by Stephanie R. Beyer

Research Committee: Chair: Mike Chovanec, Ph.D.
Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Rebecca Dosch-Brown
Emily Honken, LICSW

Abstract

According to the Autism Society of America, one in every 150 births will be affected by autism. This is approximately one to one-and-a-half million American children (Autism Society of America, 2008). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the extent to which professionals identify elements of ambiguous loss in parents of children with autism. Face to face interviews were conducted with five professionals from various agencies. The findings of this research suggested that there are key themes parents of children with autism are experiencing. Internal and external stressors were among the most common. Other key themes that emerged from the data consisted of the unexpected nature of autism, the parents’ mental health, the fact that parents are receiving supports, parental acceptance of the diagnosis, and cultural aspects of autism. Gender differences are also discussed. Limitations of this study include a small sample size with no social workers, the belief that richer data may have emerged had the researcher interviewed parents first hand, and finally, the fact that this research assumes the idea of an intact, “traditional” two-parent family.
Social Worker’s Perspectives on Providing Adult Mental Health Services in
Urban and Rural Communities: A Comparison Study

by Kelsey L. Brink

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to identify the specific challenges rural social workers face compared to their urban counterparts and to examine the ways social workers can effectively promote change. A qualitative research approach was used which included seven interviews; four interviews with rural practitioners and three interviews with urban practitioners. Standardized themes were generated from previous research. The results indicate that practitioners in rural areas have more specific challenges to face compared to urban areas. Rural practitioners struggle with a lack of adequate resources for themselves and for their clients. By way of contrast, urban practitioners have access to more resources than rural practitioners and do not have the same struggles that rural practitioners have. It is evident that practitioners and clients in rural areas need more resources. Rural areas can maximize the utility of existing resources by increasing cost effectiveness and reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers. These findings are consistent with previous research. The findings of this study strongly suggest that more training can be provided to rural practitioners. Additionally, transportation options should be provided to clients to get to appropriate resources that suit their needs.
Recognizing Traumatic Brain Injury among Clients

by Natalie Dennen Brown

Research Committee:

Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D.
Members: Rachel Kremer, LICSW
Tim McGuire, LICSW

Abstract

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) impacts hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. In the United States alone, 1.4 million people sustain a TBI each year (Brain Injury Association of America, 2008). TBI is commonly referred to as the “silent epidemic” or “hidden disability” because even though it occurs frequently the public knows little about it and there are often no physical markers on a person indicating he or she has a brain injury (Degeneffe, Boot, Kuehne, Kuraishi, Maristela, Noyes, Price, Slooten & Will, 2008; Simpson, Simons & McFadyen, 2002). The purpose of this project was to explore whether or not mental health professionals practicing in the community are able to recognize the signs and symptoms of TBI among their clients. Using a qualitative, random sample design, 20 volunteer licensed independent clinical social workers were administered a case study and survey to assess their knowledge of TBI. Data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches. Categories were first developed from the survey responses and then linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated that many of the respondents have some basic understanding of TBI or are at least somewhat aware of TBI. However, the respondents have some difficulty distinguishing TBI from PTSD and depression. It would be valuable for mental health professionals to have training on how to diagnosis TBI among clients including what signs and symptoms to look for and how to distinguish it from PTSD and depression. Furthermore, little research has been completed specifically on this topic and the sample size for this study was small. It would be beneficial for more research to be completed on this subject.
A Pilot Study Regarding Supports and Barriers in Accessing Mental Health Services for Children

by Jenny E. Browne Tobin

Research Committee:  Co-Chair: Michael Chovanec Ph.D.
Co-Chair: Kendra Garrett Ph. D.
Members: Linda Hall MSW LICSW LMFT
          Adam Mrozinski MA

Abstract

This clinical research project provides information about the supports and barriers of accessing services for children who struggle with mental illness. The passing of the Children’s Mental Health Act of 1989 was a milestone for these children to be able to access services and resources. The Act directed Rule 79 County Case Management Programs to assist families in accessing services for their child, and the Act spurred counties to design programs that meet these children’s needs. Using a qualitative design, 12 county case managers, one county supervisor, and one county manager were interviewed regarding their perceptions about the supports and barriers for accessing children’s mental health services. Data was analyzed using content analysis in which themes were identified and then linked to previously related literature. The findings indicated that for children with mental health issues, there is a continuing lack of resources, and many in-home services and Personal Care Attendant’s programs have been discontinued due to lack of funding. The findings have shown the importance of continuing to provide funding for children’s mental health services and resources and educating the public about mental illness. Other barriers for accessing children’s mental health services are stigma, the mental health fragmented system, poverty, and racial and ethnic disparities, and individuals who struggle with speaking English. The Minnesota Governor’s Mental Health Initiative of 2007 was passed in order to improve access, quality, and accountability in the delivery of mental health services for children and adults. The findings from the Initiative underscored the concern that counties have about possible inequality in mental health services depending on whether the family has managed care or has a private health insurance plan.
Intentional teenage motherhood: Young mothers share their decision-making process

by Anne L. Bushnell

Research Committee:

Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D.
Members: Denise Morcomb, LICSW
Tamara Taylor, MAMFT

Abstract

This qualitative study was based on interviews with six participants who all chose to become mothers when they were under 21 years old. Interviews focused on the women’s decision-making processes, with identification of major factors they took into consideration and effects this decision made in their lives. The major themes that emerged from the interviews were wanting to mother their children differently than the way they were mothered, placing a high value on young motherhood, self-confidence and a desire to be seen and valued, finding a male who would be a good enough father, and a longing for financial and emotional stability. Implications for social work practice and suggestions for further research are included. While this study is not generalizable to the larger population, it provides information on teenage decision-making processes and adds valuable information to the growing body of knowledge on this topic.
School social worker’s perspectives:

Working with children with ADHD and their families

by Jessica C. Case

Research Committee:  Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D, LISW
               Members: Sarah Lightner, LISW
                      Emily Madland, LGSW

Abstract

Prior research has called for schools to provide services to service the unmet mental health needs of children (Psychology/Psychiatry, 2007). The goal of this study was to identify what services school social workers are able to provide in a real world setting. This study specifically sought to determine if social workers are able to facilitate combined treatment modalities with children with ADHD, their parents, and their teachers. Respondents were elementary school social workers who are members of the Minnesota School Social Work Association. Respondents were surveyed through an online questionnaire. Prior research has demonstrated the efficacy of combined treatment modalities with this population (MTA Cooperative Group, 1999). School social workers were able to provide psychoeducation and individual treatment, to children with ADHD. Time and financial constraints, as well as lack of support for parenting programs by school personnel were cited as the reason for social workers’ inability to provide combined treatment modalities. Social workers who were able to provide combined treatment modalities with children, parents, and teachers found them to be effective.
The Effects of New Medical Diagnoses on PTSD Sequelae in Adults: Implications for Preventative Health Practice

by Kingsley U. Chigbu

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D, L.C.S.W
Members: George Baboila, MSW, L.I.C.S.W
Paul Orieny, Ph.D, L.M.F.T

Abstract
Most research on the relationships between PTSD and medical diagnoses has focused on new medical diagnoses as causal factors for PTSD. In contrast, this study predicts that PTSD sequelae could be exacerbated by new medical diagnoses, and that there is need for the use of preventative approaches that prevent and maintain PTSD. This study explored the effects of new medical diagnoses on PTSD sequelae in the adults. The study also explored effective techniques used in the maintenance of PTSD symptoms, by studying 10 mental health professionals: clinical psychologists (n=3), psychiatrists (n=2), and clinical social workers (n=5) in a psychiatric clinic in the state of Minnesota. The subjects completed a survey in which they reported how their patients and clients with PTSD reported PTSD symptoms in the aftermath of a new medical diagnosis. The results indicated that all the participants observed reports of PTSD sequelae increases (hyper-arousal, re-experiencing, and avoidance symptoms) immediately after a post-PTSD chronic new medical condition. The re-experiencing sequelae were the highest PTSD symptoms that were reported almost always clients with PTSD, immediately after they had a new medical diagnosis. The psychotherapeutic approach was identified as the most effective modality for preventing PTSD symptom exacerbation, followed by medication and good care coordination. The findings show that nearly half of the respondents were not adequately screening for potential symptoms exacerbations in their patients or clients with PTSD. Given the prevalence of PTSD and high risk behaviors associated with it in the general adult population, and the significant rates of new medical diagnoses associated with PTSD, mental health practitioners need to be well equipped on how to prevent PTSD symptoms exacerbation that might result from new medical diagnoses.
Korean Adoptees’ Ethnic Identity and Strategies for Coping with Adoption

by Andrea R. Christensen

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Cynthia Gerken, MSW, LISW
Kris Potter, MA

Abstract
There have been many Korean adoptions in the United States. This qualitative study explored the factors that impact Korean adoptees’ ethnic identity development as well as coping strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five adults adopted from South Korea who lived in Minnesota. Through content analysis, seven factors were identified that affected their ethnic identity development, as well as the time periods when being adopted presented more of a challenge. All of the participants from an early age faced discrimination and presented ways to deal with the discrimination. They offered helpful suggestions for adoptive parents who plan on adopting Korean children or are parenting Korean adopted children. Implications for social work are discussed.
A Peace I Haven’t Felt in Years:

The subjective experience of a yoga group for individuals with SPMI

by Katrin Christensen-Cowan

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D.
Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW
Eric Boone, MSW

Abstract

This study was designed to explore the subjective experience of participants in a newly formed yoga group for adults with SPMI offered at a community mental health center. This was a qualitative study. Data was gathered through pre and post-tests, semi-structured interviews, and the researcher’s experience as a participant-observer in the yoga group. There were a total of six participants in the yoga group and the study. Data was analyzed both inductively and deductively: themes were developed through both open coding and analytic induction. Overall, participants described feeling better after a yoga session than they had when the session began. They described particular benefits including improved mood, increased self-awareness, decreased physical tension, improved self-regulation and increased mental focus. Many of these benefits are consistent with existing literature on yoga. Participants also described three benefits of yoga not commonly found in existing literature: a sense of the value of doing the yoga in a group, and a sense that yoga helped them to move energy, and an appreciation for the way that, in the yoga group, they felt treated as whole people. Despite their descriptions of a strongly positive experience with yoga, attendance to the weekly group was erratic (50% of participants attended only one group). Participants described some challenges that they encountered in yoga, particularly physical challenges and the challenge of sitting still. However, the primary obstacles to attendance seemed to be the unpredictability of participants’ daily lives and issues with logistics and motivation. These findings indicate that yoga may be a powerful and healing intervention for adults with SPMI, and underscore the need for coordination with case managers and other steps that may make these groups more accessible to the people they are intended to serve.
The Perspective of African American Therapists on Working with Same Race Clients

by Denise R. Crawford

Abstract

To answer the question, what do African American therapists have to say about subculture language, ethnical and racial identity, normative values and beliefs, and common interventions in the treatment of minority clients, this research reviewed and analyzed scholarly articles and books written about cultural competence. African American therapists treating African American clients was the model utilized for this same race research. The research data consisted of existing documents only, written primarily by African American therapists. The data were systematically analyzed using a content analysis research method. The results indicated that all minority clients would be better served when therapists increase their cultural awareness and competency.
Expressed Emotion in Residential Treatment Settings:

Exploring Staff and Client Interactions

by Heather M. Czycalla

Research Committee:                             Chair:    David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members:    Brooke Schultz, MSW, LICSW
            Patrick Carney, MA, LP

Abstract

Persons with mental illness have many factors that may lead to relapse and re-hospitalization. For the past sixty years, expressed emotion has been studied as one of those factors. Using a qualitative research design, staff members who work with adults with mental illness and chemical dependency were interviewed to determine whether expressed emotion has an implicit or explicit impact on their work and interactions with clients. The findings indicate that expressed emotion may have an implicit impact on the staff members’ interactions with clients. This study has implications for future research and social work practice including areas of education and training.
GLBT Young Adults: Minority Stress and Social Support

by Shelly DeVore

Research Committee: Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Leigh Combs
Faith Jaspersen, LICSW

Abstract
This qualitative study focuses on the experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) young adults as they face the unique stressors of being a member of a sexual minority group. These stressors include facing daily challenges which include non-acceptance, harassment, victimization, and discrimination. These stressors can negatively impact the overall mental health and well-being of this population. The question explored in this study is the role social support plays in mitigating the negative effects of these stressors. Eight individuals who self identified as GLBT between the age of 18 and 25 volunteered to participate in a 30 minute semi-structured, face-to-face interview. Their stories provided a rich picture of what it means to be GLBT in today’s society. Several themes emerged; non-acceptance, concealment, harassment, and depression or sadness regarding sexual orientation. The findings of the study point to the importance of social support as well as the importance of acceptance and support by parents in assisting the GLBT young person in overcoming depression and sadness associated with sexual orientation and gender identity.
Parental Bereavement in Childhood and its Impact on Future Parenting

by Tammy Doll and Julie Longerman

Research Committee:       Chair: Colin Hollidge MSW, Ph.D.  
Members: Ted Bowman MDiv  
           Theresa McPartlin MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Parental death during childhood and its impact on the lives of surviving children has been studied extensively. Although research has focused on how the loss of a parent during childhood continues to influence that child into adulthood only limited research exists on how parental death during childhood shapes future parenting. In this research, 14 interviews were conducted with adults who lost a parent between the ages of 6 and 16 who are now parents themselves. Five major themes emerged during the analysis of the research findings: childhood changes after the death of their parent, coping, impact on parenting, other impacts in adulthood, and resiliency. All of the participants in this study acknowledged at least some change in their childhood following the death of their parent. Many indicated that they took on increased responsibilities and that their relationship with their surviving parent and siblings changed. They also discussed their ability to grieve and how that was impacted by their surviving parent’s availability and emotional stability. The research findings also suggested that parental death during childhood shaped future parenting both positively and negatively for the participants. The majority of participants expressed some type of worry associated with their children as a result of their own parent’s death. Some participants expressed feeling a void associated with the loss of the deceased grandparent for their own children. On the other hand, many of the participants identified themselves as involved parents and were focused on being present for their children, communicating and expressing emotions openly, and making special memories. While all of the participants noted that the death of their parent impacted their childhood and lives in some way, several showed resiliency by noting that good came out of it.
Creative Writers with Mental Illnesses: Therapeutic Issues and Interventions
by Erin Brandel Dykhuizen

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D., LMFT, LICSW
Members: Lisa Richardson, M.S.S., LICSW
Kara Witt, Ph.D., LP

Abstract
Therapeutic issues for creative writers with mental illnesses, connections between creative writing and mental illness, and connections between creativity and mental illness were investigated through eight interviews with participants who identified as creative writers, had a diagnosis of mental illness, and had attended at least three sessions of individual psychotherapy. The findings showed that all participants found creative writing to be therapeutic for their symptoms of mental illness, which was consistent with the literature reviewed. Six participants reported that their symptoms of mental illness, especially the symptom of low self-esteem, make it difficult to write. This was inconsistent with the literature reviewed. All participants described how psychotherapists can honor creative writers’ identities as writers and thereby improve the psychotherapeutic relationship.
Integrating Spirituality into Social Work:
A Study of Practitioner Views and Experiences
by Mary Nesta Ezeanya, IHM

Research Committee:        Chair:  Sheila Brommel, Ph.D, LISW
Members:  Leaola Furman, Ph.D., LISW
          Dougals Beumer, MSW, Ed.Spec. Admin, LISW

Abstract
Although there has been a growing professional interest in spirituality and social work practice in recent years, little qualitative research has been done on practitioners’ experience of integrating spirituality in their practice. This qualitative study explores the views and experiences of nine practitioners on incorporating spirituality into social work practice. The purpose of this study was to learn how spirituality could ethically be addressed in social work practice. A semi-standardized interview was conducted using a set of written questions drawn from themes identified in the literature. This study used a content analysis to identify thematic clusters of views, strategies and experiences of professionals on the subject. The findings from this study confirmed that participants valued the spiritual dimensions of their lives and identified spirituality as a significant strength for clients. They affirmed the need to incorporate spirituality in clinical practice in order to serve clients in a holistic manner. Findings from this study suggest practitioners’ own spirituality and knowledge of the subject as motivating factors for integrating spirituality into social work practice. Implications for practice and for further research were discussed.
Mental Health and Program Stability for Youth in Out-of-Home Care

by Anne Fleming

Research Committee:
Chair: Ken Root, Ph.D.
Members: Laura Stickney, Ed.S.
             Robert Russell, B.S.W.

Abstract
Each year in the United States, thousands of children enter the foster care system. Often these are children who have suffered abuse and neglect, and enter foster care with increased rates of mental health problems. Providing stable, long-term placements for children who have been removed from their home continues to challenge the foster care system. Many foster care children experience multiple placement changes without ever finding a long-term, nurturing environment to live. The purpose of this project was to examine the role of mental health services for youth in out-of-home care, and identify if mental health services had an impact on ensuring stable out-of-home placements. Using a quantitative design, a secondary analysis was conducted of data collected by the Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies (MCCCA). The findings indicated there was a significant association between receiving mental health services while in group home care and the presence of problem behaviors, which had been identified as behaviors associated with placement breakdown. Those who received mental health services while placed in a group home were significantly less likely to present problem behaviors six-months after being discharged from the group home then those who did not receive mental health services while placed in the group home. While this study was unable to find significant association between receiving mental health services and future placement stability, its findings begin to identify ways social workers can work to ensure better outcomes for youth in out-of-home care.
Bipolar Disorder in Children and Adolescents: Presentation and Co-morbidity

by Erin Flicker

Research Committee: Co-Chairs: Kendra Garrett D.S.W
Michael Chovanec Ph.D.
Members: Cara Cowan
Katherine Hill, LISW

Abstract
Bipolar Disorder is a serious condition that is often difficult to recognize and diagnose in children and adolescents because of its imprecise fit with the symptom criteria established for adults and due to the fact that its symptoms can resemble or co-occur with those of other common childhood-onset mental health disorders. Questionnaires were completed by 34 mental health professionals and profiles of children with bipolar disorder were developed which included an outline of possible symptoms for bipolar disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorders, and oppositional defiant disorder, which were then further broken down into age groups of 7-11 years, 12-15 years, and 16-19 years. Symptoms of bipolar disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and other disruptive behavior disorders were found consistently regardless of age in children and adolescents diagnosed with bipolar. This indescriminancy in symptomology could be resolved by an adaptation of the diagnostic criterion for bipolar disorder in children and adolescents in conjunction with additional clinical education to mental health professionals regarding the presentation of bipolar disorder and its common comorbidities.
Operation Overcome Obstacles: Challenges Experienced by Veterans

Transitioning into an Educational Setting

by Vanessa M. Heit

Research Committee:          Chair:   Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Members:   Sarah Peterson, LICSW
           Faith Weiss, LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative study was to answer the question, “What are Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) student-veterans’ subjective experiences of challenges involved in transitioning into an educational setting after having served their country during the Iraq/Afghanistan Conflicts of the 21st century?” This study utilized open-ended questions during interviews which focused on changes to participants’ roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995) and related challenges during the transition process. A rich picture of the 5 student-veteran participants’ experiences was obtained. Over a dozen themes emerged from the data. A pervasive theme identified in this study was that of disconnection in relationships. Participants shared coping strategies for the challenges they faced; the most common coping strategy was utilization of mental health services. All themes are included in Appendix G. It was concluded that mental health professionals should be prepared to address the transition experience and related challenges, including disconnection in relationships.
Family Centered Services and Parent Satisfaction with
Autism Early Intervention Services and Supports

by Lisa A. Gray

Research Committee:       Chair:      Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LCSW
Members:      Julie Gagne, LICSW
               Danielle Friedland

Abstract
With the growing number of children diagnosed with autism, it is imperative that parents receive the support services that they need in order to effectively cope with the distress associated with raising a child with autism. Focusing on family support is an increasingly vital part of providing services to children with autism. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between parent satisfaction with early intervention autism services and family centered approaches. Nineteen parents from early intervention centers for autism completed an online survey about their experiences with family centered practices and their satisfaction with the services. Findings show a significant relationship between parent satisfaction and experiences with family centered practices. Furthermore, the findings show high levels of comfort with the parent-professional relationship, but low levels of parental autonomy; thus, indicating areas for further service delivery improvement.
Social Workers’ Role in Helping Alleviate Psychosocial Impairments Experienced by People Suffering From Traumatic Brain Injury

by Erica L. Hampel

Research Committee:  
Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.  
Members: Jennifer Kahn, LICSW  
Donna Nieckula, Ph.D.

Abstract

Social workers’ role in helping alleviate psychosocial impairments in people suffering from traumatic brain injury was studied using an exploratory qualitative interview format. Four participants were interviewed and reported social work interventions in areas including cognitive impacts, physical impacts, psychological impacts, psychological/mental illness impacts, behavior impacts, vocational impacts and relationship impacts. Implications include the need for social workers to keep up with current research or conduct research themselves in order to work more effectively with their clients. It is important that policies be implemented where social workers are required to take a certification course while working with individuals with TBI. The need for more research to be done on this topic in order to provide more information about the social work role was discussed as well.
The Civilian Social Workers’ Role in Aiding Veterans Overcome Transition Related Challenges

by Joel Hansen

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Randy Herman, Ed.D., LICSW LTC
. Cynthia Rasmussen, RN, MSN

Abstract
Since October 2001, more than 1.64 million American soldiers have been deployed for Operation Enduring Free (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Iraq (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). It is estimated that of the 1.64 million U.S. troops that have served, approximately 300,000 individuals currently suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major depression (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). In addition to mental illness that returning veterans and service members may face, an even greater number of veterans/service members and their families are likely to face challenges related to reintegration into civilian life and how civilian social workers can help them overcome them (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). A conceptual framework including Systems Theory, Ecological Theory, and Crisis Theory were used to understand the impact of reintegration challenges on veterans/service members, as well as factors that contribute to them. The sample was composed of 7 veterans/service members who have served in OIF and/or OEF that answered a survey consisting of multiple-choice and open ended questions that asked about reintegration experiences, stigma within the military culture, and what civilian social workers need to know in order to be of assistance. Overall findings suggest that there are number challenges facing veterans/service members upon arriving home and deter them from seeking help and that civilian social workers can be of service to veterans/service members if they possess a particular set of skills. Implications for social work include understanding military culture and the challenges facing veterans/service members, as well as their families, upon returning home from deployment.
Social Workers Perspectives on Attachment and Adoption:

Adolescent International Adoptees vs. Nonadopted Adolescents

by Sarah Heil-Brenny

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Kristine Schaefer, LGSW
Stephanie Zimmerman, LICSW

Abstract

This clinical research paper examined social workers perspectives on attachment and adoption as it relates to adopted international adolescents versus nonadopted adolescents. Adoptions of international children have grown considerably in the past few years. The topic of attachment needs of adopted adolescents has become more prominent because the adopted children are now becoming adolescents. An online survey was given to social workers throughout Minnesota about their views on whether they have experienced an increased amount of attachment problems with adopted adolescents and if adoption education assists parents in understanding the importance of attachment. The findings revealed that there was a correlation between adoption preparation and social workers perspectives on attachment issues.
Interracial Couples: Unique Barriers to Relationship

Strength and Considerations for Therapy

by Gena M. Hunstad

Research Committee: Chair: Ed Bonnie, Ph.D.
Members: Heather Demko, LGSW
Lacey Henry, BSW

Abstract

With the population of the United States changing every day to include people of many different cultures, soon White European Americans will no longer be the majority group. The changing face of the nation brings with it more complex and diverse relationships within families. Understanding unique relationship dynamics that occur within interracial relationships is becoming increasingly more important. The purpose of this research was to examine unique complicating issues that may bring interracial or multiracial couples into therapy, and how much of a role differences in race and culture play in the reasons these couples seek therapy. Further, the research sought to learn about the use of specific treatment modalities, tools, and techniques identified by therapists to be helpful and productive therapeutic interventions with this population. Using a qualitative design, seven therapists participated in a semi-structured, seven question interview. Data was analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches in which categories were developed from interview responses and then linked to the literature reviewed. The findings indicated interracial couples did not present in the therapeutic setting for issues specifically related to differences in culture or race. These couples did, however, face unique issues that can cause distress in the relationship. Therapists generally did not utilize specific assessment or treatment tools in their work with interracial couples. Therapists most effectively dealt with personal stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs about interracial couples through personal experiences within cultures other than their own, and the development of relationships with people of other races and cultures. These findings supported previous research which found that interracial couples do struggle with unique dynamics based on differences in race and culture. In addition, the findings emphasize the need for continued development and expertise in therapeutic settings with interracial couples.
Exploring Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Compassion Satisfaction among Hospice Workers

by Rebecca L. Jacobson

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.
Members: Theresa Kelly McPartlin, LICSW
Reverend Cindi McKee, MDiv

Abstract

Exploring Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Compassion Satisfaction among Hospice Workers was a quantitative exploratory study that examined the experience of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction for employees at a particular hospice agency. The study employed a questionnaire survey containing descriptive and inferential questions to gain information about the participant including; their staff type, whether they chose to do self-care outside of work to cope with work or not, the number of years they had worked in a human service agency that provided care to people, and their perceived risk or potential for compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction. The questionnaire also included the Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Self-Test for Helpers (Figley & Stamm, 1995-1998), which measured the participants’ risk for compassion fatigue and burnout, as well as their potential for compassion satisfaction. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and the data from participants who provided direct care to patients were used for analysis. Based on the results from the self-test, participant risk levels for compassion fatigue, burnout, and potential for compassion satisfaction were examined and cross-tabulated with the independent variables. No significant associations were found between the independent and dependent variables, however, the majority of the participants were at extremely low risk for compassion fatigue and burnout and had good potential for compassion satisfaction. This research study provided individuals the opportunity to measure their own risk and potential for compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction and also gave the agency the chance to assess their employees' risks and potential.
Barriers to Paternal Involvement Among Young, Low-Income Non-Custodial Fathers

by Christine M. Johnson

Research Committee:

Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Melissa Froehle, J.D.
Jane Hurley-Johncox, MSW

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers that young, low-income non-custodial fathers face to being involved with their children. Ten non-custodial fathers volunteered and participated in interviews about their relationships with their children. The focus of the interviews was to examine what their relationships with their children were like, what they wished was different, and what they perceived as the barriers to having the desired relationship with their child. From the interviews, five main barriers to paternal involvement were identified: A negative coparenting relationship, financial constraints, transportation, physical absence from the child, and the child support and legal systems. Comparisons to previous research found that with the exception of transportation and physical absence from the child, the barriers identified in this study matched barriers found in the literature. Implications for social work practice, policy, and research are also discussed.
Art and Group Work with Youth on the Autism Spectrum:  
Therapists’ Perspectives

by Melissa A. Johnson

Research Committee:            Chair:   Carol F. Kuechler, Ph.D. LISW 
Members:   Kathleen Bernhoft, MSW, LICSW 
Sandy J. Parnell, MSW, LICSW 

Abstract
People with diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) reside in an environment and or world of their own. Left to the confinement of their own inner being and socially separated from others in society, individuals with diagnoses of ASDs often fail to fully comprehend the behaviors, emotions, and thoughts of others. Incidentally, these individuals frequently exhibit social awkwardness, inappropriate behavior, and insensitivity or unawareness of verbal and nonverbal social cues. This was a qualitative research study comprised of a single, semi-structured interview, designed to understand how therapists work with youth with ASDs through the application of art activities throughout the developmental stages of group work. Participants consisted of practitioners who incorporated visual art into group work with youth on the autism spectrum. Findings demonstrate that the utilization of art in group work can address the needs and goals of youth on the autism spectrum. Art in the group setting acts as the stimulus through which a sense of competency, belonging, self-discovery, creativity, and membership for individuals with ASDs can be achieved. While there is some research on the incorporation of art therapy into group work for youth who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, there is still a need for additional research. More research will contribute to further understanding about the benefits and challenges of incorporating art activities when working with youth with ASDs in a group. As the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) continue to increase, professionals will need to be well equipped with a variety of interventions to in order to handle the multidimensional components associated with this type of diagnosis.
Secondary Traumatic Stress & School Social Workers

by Pattijo E. Johnson

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D, LISW
Members: Tanya Leskey, MSW, LICSW
                      Kathy Caron, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This study provides findings for a survey that was conducted to determine if school social workers are at-risk of the developing symptoms of secondary traumatic stress in the school environment. Sixty-four members from the Minnesota School Social Work Association (MSSWA) completed the survey. The Secondary Traumatic Stress and School Social Workers survey was developed by the researcher. The sample was gathered from school social workers all over Minnesota. The results from the correlation tests determined that school social workers who have higher rates of students with trauma histories caused them have high rates of emotional, physical, psychological, behavioral, cognitive shifts and work-related symptoms of STS as shown by lower scores. School social workers had symptoms of STS in all areas tested in the research.
Patient and Employee Perspectives on the Feasibility of Social Work in Primary Care

by Mary K. Jordan

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, PhD.
Members: Mary P. Winkels, MSW
Katie Holley-Carlson, MHA

Abstract
Outpatient medical care and treatment of the whole patient are waves of the future in American Healthcare. Social Workers in primary care clinics may be a critical facet of this care. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the potential benefits and drawbacks of having Social Workers in Primary Care Clinics from the perspectives of both clinic employees and patients. Two focus groups were conducted; the employee group consisted of four nurses and one medical assistant. The patient group was made up of six female patients. Participants were based on convenience samples and were chosen on a first come first serve basis. The groups were digitally recorded, transcribed and thematically coded. The three primary themes that emerged from the data were, collaboration, social work roles, and financial or reimbursement issues. The benefits and drawbacks that were uncovered in relation to these themes is the basis of the findings for this study. Use of focus groups for data collecting created an interesting and rich result. As could be expected, benefits and drawbacks were found. The results were interesting in that there is seems to be much support for having social workers as part of the primary care team. The drawbacks to this model, the most outstanding being financial and reimbursement issues, present huge challenges to the future of social work in outpatient medicine from a social policy level.
Disenfranchised grief: Foster parents’ experiences of grief and loss

by Maggie Justen

Research Committee:  
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW  
Members: Denise Morcomb, MSW, LICSW  
Sharon Moten, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

Few resources are dedicated to addressing foster parents’ grief and loss when children in foster care leave the home. The purpose of this qualitative study is to gather information on foster parents’ experiences of grief and loss. Seven foster parents were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews. Interview transcripts were coded for themes. Participants identified themes of loss experienced when the child leaves the home, the importance of attachment, and the significance of where the child is now. Participants also identified what type of supports they found helpful. Times when foster parents’ grief may have been disenfranchised were also identified. Implications to social work practice and suggestions for future research are identified.
Counseling Women Post Abortion:
Assessment and Treatment From a Practitioners Perspective
by Elizabeth J. Kampf

Research Committee:

Chair: Jessica Toft. Ph.D. LISW
Members: Pam Cleary, LICSW
Suzanne Swanson, PhD, LP

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to investigate the methods and techniques used by mental health professionals and support group facilitators when treating women who are experiencing emotional distress following an abortion. It intended to highlight the unique assessment techniques, treatment methods, and perceived outcomes of this type of therapy. Four individuals, two support group facilitators and two clinicians, were interviewed using qualitative methods and the interviews were interpreted using grounded theory analysis. The research endorsed the four main theories in the literature including cognitive behavioral, psychodynamic, grief and bereavement, and feminist theory. Interviewees also endorsed the use of support and normalization, reconciliation, and a non-judgmental approach.
Attitudes Towards Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Practice and Education

by Margaret Mary Kelly

Abstract

Social work practice has its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Despite these roots, there has been a trend among social workers to dismiss the spiritual dimensions of practice. The purpose of this project was to understand the attitudes of clinical level social workers towards spirituality in practice. A quantitative design was used. Approximately 100 clinical level social workers (approximately 42 responded) were solicited from a professional organization in Minnesota. They were sent an electronic survey that contained demographics questions and the Role of Religion and Spirituality in Practice Scale. This scale was developed by Dr. Michael Sheridan to understand social work attitudes toward religion and spirituality in practice and education. There were no statistically significant findings in this project. The demographics portion of the survey did show that the social workers sampled held different faith beliefs than the population at large, which is consistent with previous research.
School Social Worker Perspectives on Practice With At-Risk Students

by Kristin M. Keys

Research Committee:  Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
       Members:  Vickie Schaefer, MSW, LGSW
          Sandy Parnell, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This study explored, from the school social workers’ perspective, how high schools identify and serve at-risk adolescents. Four participants (two men and two women, ages ranging from mid-twenties to mid-forties) answered questions about policies and practice within their schools targeted at identification of and work with at-risk students. Findings identified that at-risk students who have at least one significant relationship with a staff member in the school were more attached/engaged to their school and were more likely to successfully complete high school. Also identified were the importance of parental involvement and staff collaboration. Implications for practice include the need for staff members to form supportive relationships with at-risk students. It would also be important for schools to work to involve parents to the greatest extent possible. Finally, staff members should work together with increased communication, to best identify and serve those students who are at-risk.
The Role Music Plays With Substance Using Adolescents

by Dana L. Krahenbuhl

Research Committee:  
Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, Ph.D. LICSW
Members: Julie M. Johnson MSW
         Kimberly J. Hall B.A.

Abstract

This research discusses the value of using music as a mechanism to work with substance using adolescents. The present study highlights how social work practitioners can utilize elements of the youth culture to develop affective intervention strategies. It outlines the ability of using music to facilitate self-awareness and promote connection to the process of treatment. This research aimed to examine music’s significance when working with adolescents in eliciting emotional expression regarding alcohol and drug use. Exploratory interviews were conducted and qualitative data was investigated using an analytical method with sensitizing concepts; situational mechanisms were music contributed to the environment, their preference for rhythm versus lyrics, self-awareness of the reasons for music utilization, and emotional connection either raised by or linked to songs, music contributing to triggers of environmental cues associated with drug use, and the use of music as a coping mechanism to abstain from using alcohol or drugs. Results demonstrated music significantly increased participants’ self-awareness of songs evoking feelings surrounding substance use. Findings were in favor of music as being a motivating tool to work with adolescents that is age appropriate, culturally competent, and meets the client needs.
Comparing Secondary Trauma among Rural and Urban Social Workers

by Julie A. Krings

Research Committee:
Chair: Sarah Ferguson, PhD., LICSW
Members: Tammy Kincaid, MSW
Jennelle Wolf, CSW

Abstract
Child protection workers in many rural communities are faced with the challenge of being isolated geographically, having limited access to scarce resources, engaging in unavoidable dual relationships, and experiencing concerns for their personal safety. Rural organizations are also challenged to recruit and maintain qualified social workers. Due to the challenges of working in a rural community, it is important to consider how these challenges may be related to secondary trauma. Secondary trauma can lead to personal distress for social workers and their families. It may also contribute towards turnover within organizations and impact the services clients receive. As a result, examining the impact of secondary trauma in rural communities is an important issue for the field of social work. A quantitative data analysis was completed with four county social service agencies in Western Wisconsin to examine the impact of secondary trauma among rural social workers. This research study examined the question of whether or not rural workers had an increase in risk of secondary trauma when compared to urban workers. An analysis was completed utilizing a cross-sectional survey and the findings and their significance will be discussed in this report.
How Are the Developmental Needs of the Orphan Children at Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) Guatemala Orphan Home Addressed?

by Karen M. Kubes

Research Committee: 
Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D. 
Members: Angeline Barretta-Herman, Ph.D. 
Hugh McElroy, BA

Abstract
All children have developmental needs that need to be addressed to encourage growth and development. The purpose of this project was to explore how the developmental needs of the orphan children at Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) Guatemala orphan home are being addressed. Using a qualitative design, nine interviews with 11 adult employees and volunteers were conducted regarding their perceptions about the developmental needs of the orphan children at NPH Guatemala and how they are being addressed. Data were analyzed using an inductive approach in which themes were first developed from the interview responses and then were linked back to previous related literature. The findings indicated that the some of the developmental needs of the children were being met better than others. The emotional support of the children at NPH Guatemala appeared to be one of the greatest needs that the respondents discussed. Clinical social workers could provide this missing link. These findings suggest that even in the most ideal setting, orphan children are still not getting all of their developmental needs met.
Families of Children with Autism
by Katie Kubistal

Research Committee:        Chair: Michael Chovanec Ph.D.
                           Kendra Garrett, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Jeff Pionkowski, MA
        Jane Hurley-Johncox, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This qualitative study focused on professionals’ perception of what helps and hinders coping abilities among the families of children who suffer from autism. There has been little research done on how professionals can better understand families that have children with autism and how they function, specifically with typical siblings. Typically developing siblings are defined as children who do not have autism.

For this study, six professionals from a Minnesota agency who work with both families and children with autism were interviewed. Grounded theory, content analysis and inter-rater reliability were used to code the data to develop themes. The major finding that developed from this study was that families need support when they have a child with autism. The major themes that were revealed that have an impact on families’ abilities to cope were; child characteristics, impact of the diagnosis on the family, family dynamics including sibling relationships and socioeconomic status. With these findings professionals can better advocate for families of children with autism.
Countertransference Themes in Eating Disorder Providers

by Nicole Kuenzli

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, MSW, PhD, LISW
Members: Maggie Vertalino, RD, LD, MPH
Laurie Braunshausen, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

This study seeks to more fully understand the types of countertransference reactions eating disorder providers have with their clients, how these reactions affect providers’ interactions with client, how these reactions are dealt with in providers’ practices. There were 35 participants in this study, all who work for an outpatient, suburban clinic that specializing in treating eating disorders. Nearly 60% of the participants identified as having had an eating disorder in the past, with some still struggling. Participants completed an online survey consisting of 30 quantitative questions and 3 qualitative. The data were analyzed using chi-squares, T-tests, correlations and ANOVAs. The qualitative responses were coded and then analyzed thematically. The Eating Disorder Provider Countertransference Scale (EDPCS) was an important part of this study. EDPCS scores were highest for those participants who identified that they currently struggle with disordered eating thoughts and actions, and lowest for those who denied ever having had disordered eating. This study also showed that levels of burnout for providers were associated with an increased number of hours providers worked per week. This study also showed that many providers deal with countertransference reactions through the use of supervision, case consultation, talking with a team member and/or personal therapy. It was identified that participants felt that agencies have a responsibility to deal with countertransference reactions when they appear, and this should be done through case consultation, supervision, team meetings, trainings and personal therapy.
The Needs of the Growing Populations of Adults with Developmental Disabilities

by Holli LaFerriere

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what supports exist for aging adults with developmental disabilities and their families. This population has been growing in size due to better medical advances and improved living conditions. This research will help identify current existing supports within our system and supports which are greatly needed now and in the future. This study examined gaps in the system of support and provides a basis for educating future social workers on the current challenges faced by aging adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Previous research findings have revealed the need for more training, education and understanding within the realm of service providers. Previous research also revealed an increase need for family preparation and better healthcare services for adults with developmental disabilities. This study has found that families have started to take more active measures in planning for the future well-being of their adult child. However, there is still a need for more professional advocacy for families, more organization within the system of support, and more specialized healthcare for this unique population.
Service Provider’s Attitudes Towards Human Sexuality in Clients with Developmental Disabilities

by Elizabeth B. Langlais-Sick

Abstract
People with developmental disabilities experience sexual needs and desires like the rest of society, however, societal beliefs about human sexuality in this population can negatively affect support and education provided to this population. The purpose of this study was to explore: attitudes service providers had towards sexuality in their developmentally disabled clients, how these attitudes effected how they supported clients with these issues, and how participants felt their agency was doing at providing education and support to clients and staff about sexuality issues. Using a qualitative survey, nine participants answered questions regarding their perspectives on: agency effectiveness in providing education and support, personal attitudes on appropriate sexual expressions for clients, personal levels of comfort with the subject, and education the agency should provide its clients and staff. Data were analyzed primarily in a deductive manner, as categories were set through Social Cognitive Theory. Findings indicated a variety of beliefs about appropriate sexual behavior for clients; ranging from feeling clients should have the rights the rest of society has to believing only minimal expressions were appropriate. Findings also indicated the agency participants worked for may not provide the education staff and clients need. Findings showed a need for education and training for service providers in the area of human sexuality in their clients to increase comfort levels. Increased comfort levels may help staff provide education and support previous literature showed as a critical need for people with developmental disabilities.
Engaging the Disengaged: Working with Biological Parents of Children with Reactive Attachment Disorder

by Lauren A. Lappe

Research Committee: Sheila Brommel, L.I.S.W.
Members: Karen Krueger-Slaght, L.I.C.S.W.
Lindsey Nelson, L.I.C.S.W.

Abstract
Attachment disorders affect approximately 1% of all children in the United States. Eighty percent of abused and neglected children within the country’s foster care system display symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD). It is well established that children with attachment problems are likely to have biological parents with attachment difficulties themselves. While there is no consensus on the most effective treatment for RAD, most treatment methods require the active involvement of the parent(s). However, there are challenges to engaging individuals with attachment difficulties that may impede the effective treatment of a child with RAD. This study examined the challenges specific to working with the biological parents of children with RAD using a qualitative, semi-standardized interview format and a nonprobability sampling method. Four clinicians at an organization serving families and their children with RAD were interviewed about their experiences working with the biological parents of children with RAD. Themes were identified through open-coding. The findings suggest that clinicians working with this population face a double-bind in that parents with attachment difficulties make it difficult to effectively treat the child, but clinicians working with children are not in a position to address the parents’ attachment related needs.
Program Evaluation of Minnesota Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services at two agencies

by Beth Anne Liska

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Barb Austin, MHP
           Melinda Shamp, MS, LSW, CPRRP, MHRP

Abstract
Adult Mental Health Rehabilitative Services (ARMHS) are offered to people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. These services promote rehabilitation in the individual for social proficiency, personal and emotional adjustment, ability to manage his or her illness, and increase independent living and community skills. This program evaluation was designed to assess the impact of ARMHS on the individual’s quality of life. Thirty one case records were reviewed for intervention methods, outcomes, and barriers to progress. Data was analyzed by use of frequency distributions. Findings indicate service disruptions were prominent in half of the cases reviewed, medication compliancy was the most frequent outcome of service and most frequent reason for disruption of service was the closing of the case.
Student Attitudes toward Mental Illness

by Rebecca S. Loftus

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Tricia Sedlacek, MSW, LSW
Kim Sauvageot, MSW, LGSW

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to look at post secondary student attitudes toward mental illness. This information was obtained by surveying 63 students from a local liberal arts private college who identified themselves as social work and communication majors. The survey instrument used for this study consisted of a preexisting survey of 33 questions; five of these questions related to demographic information while the remaining 28 questions all tied back to seven key areas of focus. These sub categories were: anxiety, relationship disturbance, hygiene, visibility, treatability, professional efficacy, and recovery. These sub categories were later compared to students’ previous contact with someone who had a mental illness and their past formal education about this population. Quantitative research was used to tabulate the findings to these survey questions. By running t-tests it become more apparent where misconceptions tended to lie when looking at mental illness among the student population. These tests also looked to see if contact with this population and formal education assisted in breaking down these misconceptions and the stigma that has surrounded this population for many years. The findings suggest that education and contact with this population tend to positively affect student’s attitudes toward certain areas pertaining to mental illness but not others. Areas to consider for future research on student’s attitudes toward mental illness and other implications for social work practice are discussed.
Parental Bereavement in Childhood and Its Impact on Future Parenting

by Tammy Doll and Julie Longerman

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge MSW, Ph.D.
Members: Ted Bowman MDiv
Theresa McPartlin MSW, LICSW

Abstract

Parental death during childhood and its impact on the lives of surviving children has been studied extensively. Although research has focused on how the loss of a parent during childhood continues to influence that child into adulthood only limited research exists on how parental death during childhood shapes future parenting. In this research, 14 interviews were conducted with adults who lost a parent between the ages of 6 and 16 who are now parents themselves. Five major themes emerged during the analysis of the research findings: childhood changes after the death of their parent, coping, impact on parenting, other impacts in adulthood, and resiliency. All of the participants in this study acknowledged at least some change in their childhood following the death of their parent. Many indicated that they took on increased responsibilities and that their relationship with their surviving parent and siblings changed. They also discussed their ability to grieve and how that was impacted by their surviving parent’s availability and emotional stability. The research findings also suggested that parental death during childhood shaped future parenting both positively and negatively for the participants. The majority of participants expressed some type of worry associated with their children as a result of their own parent’s death. Some participants expressed feeling a void associated with the loss of the deceased grandparent for their own children. On the other hand, many of the participants identified themselves as involved parents and were focused on being present for their children, communicating and expressing emotions openly, and making special memories. While all of the participants noted that the death of their parent impacted their childhood and lives in some way, several showed resiliency by noting that good came out of it.
Promoting Well-Being in Dialectical Behavior Therapists Treating Chronically Suicidal Clients

by Christine Lord

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, PhD, LISW
Members: Lisette Haro, MSW, LGSW
Lane Pederson, PsyD

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to explore how therapists using Dialectical Behavior Therapy promote their personal and professional well-being when dealing with this population. Social work implications and recommendations for future research were also discussed. Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) clinicians from Mental Health Systems, PC (MHS) were invited to participate in this study and the participants needed to meet specific criteria. All participants were required to be actively providing dialectical behavior therapy, or supervising therapists practicing DBT, and have worked in DBT for at least 18 months. The participants also needed to have worked with at least one client with a history of chronic suicidality. The overall findings highlighted the various ways in which clinicians use resources internally and externally from a systems perspective to promote their personal and professional well-being. Therapists identified at the micro level how they find meaning through connections with the clients and engage in solitary activities at work. On the meso level, the participants reported the importance of connecting with colleagues at MHS, family and friends, the larger mental health community and their own social communities. The macro level responses included stigma and societal view of suicide and how these factors that impact the clinician’s treatment.
Adolescent Mental Health Residential Treatment: Post Discharge Status

by Kimberly Lovejoy

Research Committee: Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Monica Smith, MA, LAMFT Ed.D.
Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences that adolescent clients faced within the first six months following discharge from a residential treatment setting. This descriptive study is based on a secondary analysis of client data from six-month follow up phone interviews regarding adolescent clients who had been discharged from an inpatient mental health treatment center between 2003 and 2007. Findings documented the recurrence of out-of-home placement and the recurrence of problematic behaviors that clients experienced prior to receiving treatment. Implications for social work practice include the need to develop aftercare for these youth. Suggestions for future research include studying the efficacy of programs, determining the best approach for aftercare, and assessing importance of family involvement.
Domestic Abuse in Uganda: Impact on Women Living with HIV/AIDS

by Olivia Lunkuse

Committee members: Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Richard Spratt, MSW
Amy Parsons, Clinical Case Manager

Abstract
This research examined the impact of domestic abuse on women’s ability to access and maintain HIV treatment. A qualitative research design was used to gather data from HIV positive women on anti-retroviral drug (ARV) treatment at the Infectious Diseases Institute in Kampala, Uganda. A purposive sample of 12 women experiencing domestic abuse in intimate relationships was used. The women were individually interviewed to obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and needs. The content analysis revealed less impact of domestic abuse on a woman’s ability to access HIV treatment and a larger impact on ability to maintain treatment. The findings also revealed continued poor health among interviewees despite the strict adherence to ARV treatment. Implications for social work such as integrating culturally sensitive HIV and domestic abuse treatment interventions in primary care to abused HIV positive women, creating programs to deal with chemical dependence, community and gender attitudes, and advocating for laws against domestic abuse are discussed.
Remembering Old Friends: Religion, Spirituality, and Social Work Education

by Jeffrey Maciej

Research Committee
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph. D., LICSW
Members: Leola Dyrud Furman, Ph.D., MSW
Christopher R. Beamish, LICSW

Abstract
In the past 15 years, there has been an explosion in research on the relationship between religion, spirituality and social work, including topics like the decision to enter social work, social work education, and practice using spiritually-derived interventions. This study sought to build upon existing research to answer the following questions: “How do religious and spiritual beliefs affect one’s decision to enter the field of social work, and their adherence to the core values of this profession?”, “How effectively has discussion of spirituality and religion been incorporated into social work education?”, and “How well prepared are new social workers to address the spiritual and religious beliefs of their clients?” A total of 51 randomly selected and recently licensed LSWs and LGSWs from the state of Minnesota responded to an online survey which used existing quantitative instruments and three open-ended questions. It was found that personal religious/spiritual beliefs have at least some role in the choice of social work as a career and adherence to values such as “dignity of persons” and “importance of human relationships”. Respondents generally had a positive attitude towards incorporating religion and spirituality into social work education and practice, and made several suggestions for how these topics can be better incorporated into social work curricula. However, respondents relied more on their experience of religion and spirituality outside the classroom to prepare them for using these in practice. Spiritually-derived interventions most used by respondents matched ones found in previous research, and the factors most influencing their use were respondents’ belief that it is appropriate to discuss religion and/or spirituality with clients and their level of involvement in personal religious/spiritual activities. Implications for teaching/training and practice are discussed, as well as suggestions for future research.
Use of Social Emotional Learning as a Protective Factor For Underage Drinking

by Kristine M. Madsen

Research Committee: Chair: Ed Bonnie, Ph.D., LP; LMFT
Members: Mary E. Larscheid, MSW, Ph.D., LICSW

Abstract

The key focus of this study was the examination of the use of social emotional learning as a protective factor to reduce underage drinking. In light of the recent alcohol related deaths of youth, communities, schools and school social workers are struggling to find solutions to the problem of underage drinking. Social emotional learning offers an intervention strategy that enhances school connectedness which acts as a protective factor for underage drinking. This form of learning is a school based systematic process in which five competencies are taught to students from kindergarten to 12th grade, including self awareness, social awareness, self management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. This research study examined whether social emotional learning enhanced school connectedness which in turn served as a prevention strategy for the reduction of the underage consumption of alcohol. Using a secondary data set from a rural public school district, data from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey was analyzed regarding indicators of school connectedness and the subsequent potential impact on underage alcohol consumption. Key results were based on the responses of 12th grade students. The results identified some potential indicators of school connectedness and the existence of some risk factors. This study did not uncover any data to clearly make an association between school connectedness and underage drinking.
Southern Sudanese Acculturation Survey: Refugees Resettling in the United States of America

by Lu’bakare L. Matayo

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D.
Members: David Schuchman
         Joel Luedtke

Abstract
This study explored acculturation and acculturative challenges in Sudanese adults living in the United States of America. Nineteen Sudanese adults participated in the survey which discovered that the focal sources of acculturative challenges centered on frustration over cultural differences, language, issues of parental control, male-female roles, and conflicting cultural rules. Nevertheless, hopefulness for the future was also manifest in all the surveys. The results suggest the need for culture specific counseling practices, ongoing education on male–female roles, childcare, and parenting.
Therapists’ Attitudes Toward Personal Therapy:
Motivations, Barriers, and Impact on Practice

by Melia J. McCubbin

Research Committee: 
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D. 
Members: Jim Theisen, Ph.D., LP 
Beverly Caruso, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Personal therapy has been demonstrated to be useful to therapists and their clients by helping the therapist both personally and professionally. Nevertheless, some therapists experience barriers to seeking therapy services for themselves. Using Skovholt & Jennings’ (2004) study of peer-identified “master therapists” as a conceptual framework, this mixed-method study examined 36 therapists’ attitudes toward personal therapy, its perceived effect on therapists’ practice, and what barriers prevent therapists from seeking personal therapy. Respondents were found to have mainly positive attitudes toward personal therapy. Almost all respondents reported having undergone personal therapy at some point in their lives. The top three reasons for seeking therapy were personal distress, personal growth, and self-reflection as a practitioner. Concerns respondents had about personal therapy included cost, stigma, and confidentiality. Respondents who had undergone more than 200 hours of personal therapy were more likely to see personal therapy as having a useful impact on their professional practice as well as on personal qualities like self-awareness, self-esteem, and interpersonal functioning. Many respondents reported that they found personal therapy to be a valuable experience and felt that it was important for therapists to have the experience of being a client. Implications for training, practice, and policy are discussed.
Similar Characteristics of Reactive Attachment Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorders

by Stephanie Miller

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Liz Cronin, MA, LPC
Karen Krueger Slaught, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This research will explore the question what distinguishing characteristics clinicians use to diagnose children with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) ages birth to five. This question was explored through a qualitative survey with a sample size of six. Literature on this topic addressed the causes of RAD, the diagnosis, and symptoms. Literature on this topic also addressed PDD diagnosis, treatment options, and the similarities and differences between a RAD diagnosis and a PDD diagnosis. The literature stated one of the most distinguishing characteristic of RAD is pathogenic care and attachment of the child. The literature also stated that the type of intervention used on children varies greatly between the two diagnoses. This study found that one of the characteristics clinicians most look to when making a RAD diagnosis is attachment of the child and the over all care of the child during crucial times of development. This study also found that clinicians may diagnose a child differently based on their past experiences or assumptions they have formed about the case. In conclusion, this study found that it is important for clinicians to base their diagnosis on the information that is provided to them about a client without reading into information or forming assumptions. By doing this, the child will receive the most appropriate treatment to help them succeed.
Countertransference and Bachelor Level Social Workers

by Joy L. Montzka

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D. LISW
Members: Nancy Belbas, MSW, LICSW
Beth Larson, LSW

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to examine countertransference in the relationship between bachelor level social workers and their clients. A qualitative design was used and five interviews were completed with bachelor level licensed social workers who are currently working in the social work field. The purpose of the research was to find out how countertransference was present in the relationships between the bachelor level social workers and their clients and if the social workers were aware of countertransference in their work with clients. A content analysis of the interviews was completed. Themes emerged from the interviews and were used to examine the findings. The research found that the bachelor level social workers were not familiar with the concept of countertransference and were not aware of it in their work. The social workers did use self-reflection in their work with clients, but they did not reflect on how their own feelings (countertransference) affected their work with clients. The bachelor level social workers did have countertransference feelings during their work with clients which emerged throughout the interviews.
Finding the “Home” in “Nursing Home”: Social Workers’ Perceptions of Culture Change

by Arielah Moskow

Research Committee:                           Chair:  Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members:  Therese Buckley, MSW, LISW
          Sindy Mau, MS

Abstract
The culture change movement seeks to transform nursing homes into places in which staff and residents can thrive. However, each nursing home involved in culture change is unique, making it difficult to determine what is working and why. Because it is the role of nursing home social workers to assess and address psychosocial needs of residents, they are uniquely positioned to evaluate culture change strategies. Using a qualitative design, six social workers were interviewed about their role in the culture change process and the effectiveness of culture change strategies in their facilities. From the interviews, ten major themes emerged: creating a home-like environment, empowerment, building relationships in the nursing home, engaging residents in activity, multiple roles for staff, the influence of administration on culture change, improving working conditions, individual factors, the role of the social worker, and barriers to culture change. The importance of the social work role in promoting resident rights and psychosocial wellbeing was supported.
Clinical Social Work Interventions in the Treatment
of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

by David A. Munson

Research Committee:  
Chair: Ed Bonnie, Ph.D.
Members: Jim Tack, MSW
Ralph Johnson, MSW

Abstract
Serious and Persistent Mental Illnesses exact a great cost to society both in terms of human suffering, and in terms of financial loss. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is one form of mental illness that tends to be chronic over time. The purpose of this study is to compare new evidence-based guidelines for treatment of this disorder with the results of a set of questions presented to a random sample of licensed independent clinical workers currently practicing in the state of Minnesota. Due to lack of previous statistical data for comparison, conclusions not able to be generalized. The data did showed this cross section of clinical social workers to be overwhelmingly of the female gender. The data suggested general adherence to American Psychiatric Association guidelines for the treatment of obsessive compulsive disorder. Further study of evidence based practices and their implementation is recommended to assure that strategies for the delivery of effective treatment methods are being translated into the field.
Emergency Department Nurses Attitudes of Individuals Who Engage in Deliberate Self-Harm

by Lindsay Nelson

Research Committee: Chair: Phillip AuClaire
Members: Beth McAlister, RN, MA
Dana Tonne, LGSW

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of emergency department nurses towards patients who engage in deliberate self-harm (DSH) in the Twin Cities area. By better understanding the strengths and limitations of the emergency health care system and specifically emergency department nurses, social workers can better address the need for communication, knowledge, empathy, and alliances. This allows social workers and health care providers to properly serve and treat this vulnerable population. By using a semi-structured interview questionnaire, the participants explained their perspective and understanding of DSH. Participant responses were coded using grounded theory. It was found that the emergency department nurses in the twin cities area have mostly neutral to positive attitudes towards this population. It was also discovered that nursing professionals utilize social workers as informal supports in hospital practice. These findings also indicate there continues to be a limited knowledge base in the area of DSH which may impact the quality of care they receive despite the participants’ generally positive attitude towards the population.
Spirituality’s Association with Depression in Older Adults

by Sheila M. Neurauter, LSW

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Audrey Peham, MA, LISW
Bonnie Eller, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore if there is an association between spirituality and depression in older adults. The sample consisted of a convenience sampling of 35 self-selecting volunteers who were independent, healthy, seniors, from senior centers and church groups. Data was obtained through use of a quantitative survey. The survey inquired about current emotional well-being using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) and about spiritual strategies used as a solution for problems by using Holly Nelson-Becker’s Spiritual Strategies Scale (SSS). The research found a relationship exists between spiritual coping and reduction of, or lack of depression; as people show signs of spiritual coping they show a reduction in their feelings of depression. The results show a negative medium strength correlation (r. = -0.402) with a significant p-value of 0.017. Although it was not statistically significant, there were also differences for men and women.

As a student or practitioner, even if one does not utilize spirituality on a personal level, having an awareness of the importance/impact of spirituality/religion on depression and being aware of the spiritual resources people have would be beneficial to include as part of a strengths based assessment and treatment. Students and practitioners would need to be comfortable hearing about and/or discussing client beliefs. It would also be beneficial for students and practitioners to be familiar with the implications of religious/spiritual beliefs that could be present between genders.
Impact of Family Involvement in Nursing Home Residents: Social Work Perspective

by Florence Okoampa

Research Committee: Chair: Michael G. Chovanec, Ph.D.
Kendra J. Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Kristen Pearce, MSW
Tricia Miller, BSW

Abstract

Family members play a major role in how nursing home residents adjust to the facility. This study focused on the impact family involvement has on residents’ living in nursing homes. Eight social workers were interviewed about their views on the importance of family involvement. This study showed that family involvement is important not only to the resident but also to the staff. At the same time, residents whose families are over-involved can cause issues at the nursing home. Also, socialization seems to be a good thing for residents. Family relationship with residents can affect their involvement in the nursing home. Residents and family members will benefit from good communication and support provided to them by staffs in the facility.
Widening Spaces of Hope: Catholic Church Response
To Domestic Violence

by Deborah A. Organ, BSW MDiv DMin

Research Committee: Chairs: Kendra Garrett and Michael Chovanec
Members: Dave Mathews, PsyD
Jose Santiago, MSW DMin

Abstract
It is well documented that many women turn first to their communities of faith for help and support when they are in domestic violence situations. Studies also indicate that faith community response can either help or hurt domestic violence survivors. This study sought to determine what two Catholic archdioceses are doing at the micro, mezzo and macro levels to respond to the needs of women in domestic violence situations. Eight interviews with top archdiocesan administration and local Catholic pastors indicated a significant gap between what they believe, and what the United States Catholic Bishops have articulated in their 1992 document, is the appropriate response of the Catholic Church at all three levels and what is actually happening currently in their local churches. Respondents identified the potential of the Church to respond more effectively to domestic violence in the wake of the clergy sexual abuse crisis that surfaced in the late 1990’s, and also acknowledged that the potential has not been realized for a variety of reasons, including economic challenges and the emergence of other priorities in recent years. This study revealed the need for further research on the Catholic Church and domestic violence, as the sample was not large enough in this study to generalize results.
Healthy siblings of children with life threatening illnesses: Parents’ perceptions of resilience and adjustment.

by Andrea Patten

Research Committee: Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D.
Members: Kristen Boysen
Theresa Huntley, MSW

Abstract
Resilience and adjustment in healthy siblings of children with life threatening illnesses was studied through an exploratory quantitative study using an online survey of parents’ perceptions. Eleven respondents reported a variety of coping strategies used by the healthy siblings in response to the child’s life threatening illness. Anxiety symptoms were most commonly reported, along with some depressive symptoms. Very few externalizing symptoms were reported, and half of the parents reported some adverse impact on academic performance. Implications include the need for social workers to help support these siblings as well as other family members of children with life threatening illnesses. Also, policy makers should promote insurance coverage of family therapy. More research is necessary to help us understand family members, specifically the healthy siblings’ psychosocial adjustment and resiliencies.
Abstract
Natural disasters are very erratic and overwhelming to individuals and communities. Crisis intervention is very important element in the recovery process for survivors. This research study examined the impacts that natural disasters have on survivors and crisis responders. The study focused on three areas. The first area was the survivor emotional and psychological effects. The second area examined clinical ethical concerns focusing on cultural and socioeconomic problems. The last area explored secondary trauma effects on crisis responders. Four clinical social workers were interviewed. Responses were analyzed and coded using themes, meanings, biases, and relevant information. Findings were conclusive regarding short term effects. Survivors experienced short term physical and emotional reactions after a natural disaster occurred. Long term effects were inconclusive. Responses to cultural and socioeconomic problems differed based on therapist perception. Secondary trauma responses varied based on therapist experience. This study explored the importance and need for proper trauma counseling, especially in relation to the long term impact of a natural disaster on individuals and families.
What Factors Prevent or Support Burnout in Mental Health:

The Professional Perspective

by Sarah Peterson

Research Committee: Chairs: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Mary Harrold, BSW
Susie Kennelly, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
What factors prevent or support burnout in mental health? Fifty-three professionals working in mental health responded to a survey about burnout and stressors in their jobs. Overall, this study looked at what factors are preventing and what factors are contributing to burnout among the professionals at this agency. In this study, 87% of respondents report experiencing burnout in the past. Another 52% of respondents report currently being moderately to highly burnt out in their current jobs. The impact of these findings further emphasizes the importance of understanding factors that support burnout in an effort to find more ways to prevent this phenomenon from affecting individuals, clients, agencies, and the profession. This study also found that support was a prevention factor that was prominent throughout the research findings, with 86.79% of respondents reporting that they had a supportive supervisor and another 89% agreeing that their co-workers were supportive as well. With this information this agency can chose to begin looking at ways to highlight the things that are positive, such as support, and those that need to be improved, such as reported stressors.
The Effects of Health Insurance on Mental Health Services

by Leah M. Poissant

Research Committee: Chair:  Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Julie Carlson, MA, LPC
Jody Kirchner, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

The involvement of health insurance companies in mental health treatment is something that is necessary, but may at times cause frustration for both clients and clinicians. The purpose of this study was to explore how health insurance influences mental health services, whether positively or negatively. Using a qualitative method, a survey was sent out to 159 Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers who practice within Stearns, Benton, Sherburne or Wright Counties. The respondents were asked to complete the survey which asked questions about their personal experiences with health insurance, how it influenced the services they provided, whether or not it affected the therapeutic alliance, and their overall perception of how managed care influenced mental health services. The results were reviewed using data analysis and each survey was carefully reviewed, seeking out common themes among respondents. The findings revealed that while health insurance certainly does influence the services that can be provided by limiting the number of visits and requiring extensive and time-consuming paperwork, most respondents did not feel that the inclusion of the third party payment system into the therapeutic relationship affected the alliance in any way, and that clinicians were still able to provide ethical and effective treatment. These findings, unlike the literature, indicate that while health insurance does play an instrumental role in mental health services, it does not overall disrupt or decrease the effectiveness of treatment that is provided. However, being many respondents did state frustrations with health insurance companies, it is apparent that further research is needed in this area to enhance the collaborative relationship between therapist and insurance company.
Identity Development and Experience: Multiracial Young Adults Speak

by Rebecca C. Pournoor

Research Committee Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Angeline Barretta-Herman Ph.D., LICSW
         Arleta Little MSW, LISW

Abstract
Racial identity has many facets beyond skin color, it is constructed over time, in ever changing contexts, and is highly personal for those who are Multiracial. The purpose of this project was to explore how family, peer, and social influences helped shape Multiracial identity development in individuals ages 18 – 25 years of age. Using a qualitative design, seven female volunteers, who each have parents from two distinct racial backgrounds, were interviewed regarding their personal racial identities and experiences. Data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches in which categories were first developed from the interview responses and then were linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated that a small sample of multiracial individual’s sense of identity evolved over time through an active process of experience, learning, and acceptance. Racism within the family came to light as participants expounded on family discussions on race. In addition, the struggle between racially self identifying and societies categorizing and navigating limited racial categories on forms also emerged out of the findings. These findings underscore the need for social workers to increase awareness and sensitivity to Multiracial individuals sense of racial identity, experience, and strengths.
Social Work Principles and Catholic Teaching: Implications for Catholic Social Workers

by Paula J. Pridie

Research Committee:                                Chair:      Jessica Toft, PH.D, LISW
Members:      Father Jay Kythe, M.A.Phil, M.Div.
               Christine Johnson, LICSW, MSW,LPN

Abstract

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has a set of Ethical Principles in their Code of Ethics that are widely considered the social work profession’s endorsed guidelines for ethical practice. The Catholic Church has a set of Social Teachings that it expects all people to live by. There are many similarities between the two, but also several differences. When these differences conflict, how do Catholic social workers determine which set of values they will use within their practice? The theoretical framework suggests three philosophies by which people make decisions, which are the deontological, teleological and utilitarian theories. A survey was taken by 35 Catholic social workers to assess to what degree they followed NASW ethical principles or Catholic teachings within their practice, especially with regard to social issues that capture these conflicting ethical guidelines. Despite the variety of answers given, most Catholic Social workers were apt to follow Catholic teaching over the NASW ethical principles when those differed, and were most likely to choose a deontological framework response—basing a decision on the Church’s predetermined decision about whether the action itself was right or wrong, good or bad. Due to the self-identified “conservative Catholic” sample, a replicated, expanded, qualitative study which captures more “moderate and liberal” Catholics may offer better explanations for the respondent answers.
Benefits and Barriers to Early Intervention
for Caregivers of People With Alzheimer’s Disease

by Melanie E. Rachel

Research Committee:

Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Amanda Thooft, MSW, LGSW
Therese Buckley, LISW

Abstract

Previous studies show that various interventions for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s disease are successful in alleviating burden and depression and increase the caregiver’s ability to manage stress. The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of the benefits and barriers to early interventions for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s disease. Using a qualitative design, eight caregivers were interviewed from support groups facilitated by the Alzheimer’s Association. Participants were asked open ended questions to offer an immediate response based on their experiences as a caregiver. Data was analyzed using content analysis with a deductive approach looking for themes or patterns. The themes were coded by color and linked to previous literature. The findings indicated benefits to early intervention included: Medications, support groups and planning for the future. Barriers included: Awareness of symptoms, denial and the diagnosis process. These findings support previous literature and the need for continued efforts in providing early intervention to caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s disease.
Nature and Impact of Eating Disorders on College Life: Student’s Perceptions

by Rebecca K Rand

Research Committee:       Chair:    Carol Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
       Members:    Louise Page, MA, LPC
               Allyson Hayward, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain college students’ perspectives on eating disorders on college campuses. This study also examined students’ perceptions of the prevalence of eating disorders on college campuses and what they perceive as helpful when encountering someone with an eating disorder or disordered eating behaviors. Students at an urban Catholic university were invited to take a confidential and anonymous online survey administered via their online daily school bulletin. Overall, results showed students felt they would address someone who was presenting dangerous eating behaviors; however, there was ambiguity about what they felt was the most appropriate way to address an individual. Implications include providing clinicians with a better understanding of the college setting as it relates to eating disorder symptoms and treatment and increased education for social systems aimed to assist those supporting individuals with eating disorders.
Resilience in the Hmong and Somali Communities

by Jill M. Randall

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.
Members: Theresa Kelly McPartlin, LICSW, CASWCM
Warsame Ali Warsame

Abstract
This project contributes to the body of research on resilience and practice with refugee populations. The goals of the project were to describe and compare the resilience of the Hmong and Somali communities in the Twin Cities and to inform social work practitioners about each of these communities. Using a quantitative descriptive design, the researcher developed a questionnaire asking members of each community to assess the attributes of resilience in the community as a whole. The questionnaires were mailed to individuals in the Hmong and Somali communities. Data were analyzed using the chi-square statistic, and two open-ended questions gave respondents the opportunity to discuss problems evident in their community and what social workers should know when working with Hmong or Somali residents. In order to use the chi-square statistic, the researcher collapsed the data into two categories. One main finding was that outcomes differed depending on how the data were collapsed. Another finding was that a consistently higher percentage of Somali respondents reported that nearly all of the adult members of their community possessed attributes of resilience compared to Hmong respondents. The difference may be attributed to how long each group has been in the United States and points to the need for more research on the developmental process of resilience in refugee communities.
“It All Gets Down to When People Leave the Hospital and Where it is They Have to Go”

SPMI and Discharge Planning: A Consumer’s Perspective

by Sarah A. Reed

Abstract

People diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness are in need of post-discharge services in order to prevent hospital readmissions. The purpose of this study was to answer the question of what factors in discharge planning deter hospital readmissions for people diagnosed with SPMI in psychiatric inpatient settings. This research highlighted factors associated with hospital discharge planning from the perspective of people diagnosed with SPMI. It first defined SPMI, discussed impediments in hospital discharge planning that prevent people with SPMI from having a complete and satisfying life, and introduced efficient ways to improve treatment outcome for people with SPMI. The consumer-survivor recovery paradigm is comprised of both internal and external conditions of recovery, which is suggested to serve as factors supporting the recovery of people with psychiatric disabilities. The study was conducted under the philosophy that people can and do recover. Using a qualitative research design, the researcher interviewed eight people diagnosed with SPMI who were members of a local community support program. Semi-structured interviews with open and closed ended questions were chosen to better understand the participant’s subjective experiences in hospital discharge planning. Three major themes emerged from the interviews with people diagnosed with SPMI: 1) factors influencing discharge planning for people with SPMI; 2) external conditions facilitating recovery, and 3) internal conditions facilitating recovery. Variables such as working in collaboration with people with SPMI and engaging in follow-up may better meet the needs of this population. One way to support the recovery for a person externally was to connect them with resources in the community before they left the hospital. An internal source of recovery for participants was to assume responsibility for their own recovery. This research supported the overall phenomenon that there are specific factors to be included in hospital discharge planning when working with people with SPMI. The study offers important implications for practitioners working with the SPMI population, as well as suggestions for future research.
The Experience of Transition for Young Adults with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness

by Jessica Ricter

Research Committee:  
Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.  
Members: Katharine Hill, LISW  
Theresa Pease, LICSW

Abstract
This study explores the experience of transition from adolescence to adulthood for young adults living with a severe and persistent mental illness. Five young adults between the ages of twenty and twenty-six, living with a severe and persistent mental illness and participating in an employment supported independent living program contributed to this study. Individual qualitative interviews were conducted, focusing on past and current content areas including, family history, education, employment, mental health, criminal activity, chemical dependency, past and current living situations, influential people, strengths, and goals and hopes for the future. The findings of this study correlate closely with previous literature on this population, and add subjective experiential data to the topic areas listed above. This study highlights the difficult tasks of transition of all emerging adults, while the findings underscore the added struggles faced by individuals with mental health concerns. Implications for social work practice are also discussed; including program development, service options and utilization, education and employment advocacy, and individual work with young adults with severe mental illness.
Adolescent Relapse Factors

by Susan Roers

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph. D., LISW
Members: Andrea Vasquez, MSW, LICSW
Tiffany Leuthold, LMFT

Abstract
Chemical use by adolescents remains a critical and prevalent health problem in western culture (Bukstein & Winters, 2004). However, the adolescents who struggle with chemical dependency face complex obstacles to recovery. Relapse rates remain high while limited research has been completed to address the significant concerns following treatment. Therefore, the task of this project was to explore adolescent relapse factors by answering whether bio-psycho-social factors are associated with amount of time an adolescent spends in treatment as well as the amount of time they are sober. An exploratory research survey was conducted to gather information on biological, psychological and social factors and whether the amount of time in treatment as well as the amount of time sober influence an adolescent to relapse. The researcher invited adolescents aged 14-18 at a sobriety high school to participate in a fourteen question survey that assessed these adolescent relapse factors. The survey consisted of twelve Likert-scale statements and two nominal questions. The research identified biological, psychological and social factors all influencing an adolescent to relapse while psychological variables were found to be the largest. When addressing the bio-psycho-social factors and amount of time in treatment, some relationship was found between more time in treatment and adolescents not as affected by the social pressures to relapse. The amount of time sober and all three variables show some relationship while the most robust predictor was the psychological variable. Although there were a limited number of research subjects, the respondents offered their experience and insight that can assist social workers and the public gain an understanding of the severity of chemical use and relapse among this population.
Self-Care for Social Workers Working with Involuntary Clients

by Colette Roesler L.S.W.

Abstract
Social Work professionals working with involuntary clients can carry a lot of stress from their career. It is important that to best serve clients the social worker should be healthy mentally and physically. The day-to-day challenges that are faced by professionals can inhibit the work done with involuntary populations. There has not been much research done on self-care strategies used by professionals working with involuntary clients. The purpose of this study was to ask social workers that work with this particular population what they do to take care of themselves to avoid burnout and work related stress. A qualitative study was done with eight participants who worked directly with involuntary clients in a social work capacity. The participants described their self-care strategies, such as running, shopping or spending time with their families. At work the self-care they described was happy hours with co-workers, taking lunch away from their desks or not bringing work home. Supervision was important for many of the participants. They felt that support was really needed by their supervisors and if there was a lack of support, they felt more of the stress. If self-care was more accepted and professionals were more mindful of self-care there may be more emphasis on it in general creating more productive professionals effectively meeting involuntary clients’ needs.
Mentee’s Perspective on the Benefits of Mentoring At-Risk Youth

by Sheri Rosencrantz

Research Committee: Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph. D.
Members: Theresa Kelly McPartlin, LICSW
Kristen Thompson, LICSW

Abstract
It is common to find at-risk teens, including young mothers and other adolescents, who do not complete high school for various reasons including limited adult involvement. Providing an adult mentor for at-risk youth might be a suitable option. The purpose of this study was to examine the possible benefits of mentoring from the perspective of at-risk youth who have participated in mentoring programs. Using a qualitative method, seven young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 who had participated in a faith-based mentor programs were interviewed regarding their experience in the mentoring program. Data was analyzed using a line-by-line content analysis. A system of open coding and preliminary labeling was then used to organize the data and develop common themes. The findings support previous research that found positive benefits of mentoring, particularly in the completion of school and planning for future careers. In addition, this study found that the seven mentees interviewed had a positive outlook on their future and were all satisfied with where their lives were heading.
School Social Workers’ Role Working with Students Who Have Autism Spectrum Disorders

by Cherise M. Russell

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members: Mitch Lepiccello, LICSW
Peizhong Li, Ph.D.

Abstract

Many clinical social workers choose to work in schools, so they should be aware of the role of a school social worker with regard to children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The purpose of this study was to investigate what the role of the school social worker is when working with students who have Autism Spectrum Disorders. Using a mixed mode design survey consisting of 16 closed ended questions and 2 open ended questions, 37 school social workers were surveyed regarding their role with students who have ASD. 15 of the 16 closed ended questions were analyzed statistically, while the two open ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. The key finding was that their role is similar to their role working with non-ASD students, in that they use most of the same interventions. The major difference was the way in which they use the interventions and work with the students. Students with ASD think differently, learn differently, and perceive things differently than students who do not have ASD, so it is necessary to work with them in a way that is most effective for them, their learning style, and their ability.
Mindfulness and trauma: an exploratory study of mindfulness-based practices in the treatment of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder

by Shoshana D. Sagner

Abstract

The complexity of trauma often results in difficult to treat posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and trauma responses. These include, but are not limited to, reexperiencing, avoidance, hyperarousal, dissociation, and intra-and interpersonal problems. This research study examines how mental health professionals integrate mindfulness-based practices in their treatment of trauma. Mindfulness is the cultivation of presence, attention, and acceptance through various techniques that support present moment awareness. In addition, this study identifies the mechanisms of mindfulness that influence trauma treatment and its implications for reducing symptom severity. Using a qualitative design, eight mental health professionals were interviewed to capture the experience of implementing this approach. Data was analyzed using content analysis and open coding. Findings show that central mechanisms of mindfulness such as present moment awareness, concentration, flexible responsiveness, calmness, and acceptance, may address and help reduce trauma responses and symptom severity. Respondents discuss the benefits and challenges of integrating mindfulness-based practices in the treatment of trauma.
The Effects of Iraqi Deployments on Soldiers and Their Families

by Kristin Ann Schmidt

Research Committee:
Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Members: William Anderson, MSW, Ph.D., LISW
Mike Mathies, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This paper discusses the effects that deployment to Iraq has on the military soldier and their family. It addresses the anxieties and fears that the soldiers and their families experience during deployment, and how they relate to one another during and between deployments. The culture differences between Army, and or military life, and civilian life are also discussed. Family disruptions, and issues of grief and loss are often common in military families. Communication within the family unit is challenging during and after deployment. Implications, and challenges for social work practice are discussed.
Barriers and Disparities Affecting Latino Seekers of Healthcare in the Twin Cities

by C. Schuetz

Research Committee: 
Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Roy Garza, MSW
Shannon Kearney, MA

Abstract
This study addressed barriers and disparities faced by Latino seekers of health care in the Twin Cities. Sixteen individuals who worked with Latinos in a health care setting were interviewed. Participant employment sectors included education, state or county government, non-profit agencies and health plan representatives. An analysis of the themes that emerged from the interviews included the language barrier, difficulty navigating the system, difficulty paying for healthcare and how people cope without healthcare. Study participants also discussed how their agencies and places of employment were working towards cultural competency. Implications for further research include expanding the study size and also addressing the impact of mental health disparities on Latino seekers of healthcare.
Children’s Experiences in Supervised Visitation

by Sarah A. Schulz

Research Committee:  
Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, Ph.D.  
Members:  
Kelley Hempel, MSW  
Tracie Stinson, B.S.

Abstract

The ongoing impact of domestic violence and child abuse on children reflects the interaction of multiple variables. The purpose of this project was to explore children’s experiences in supervised visitation, with the parent that was the perpetrator of domestic violence or child abuse, to delineate these multiple variables that may develop safer environments for supervised visitation. Using a qualitative design, eight subjects were interviewed regarding their experiences in supervised visitation in regard to awareness, safety, affect, and agency impact. Data were analyzed using an inductive approach of the Grounded Theory Method in which categories were first developed from the interview responses and then were linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated that although most of the children reported feeling “physically” safe, their affect responses did not indicate them being “emotionally/mentally” safe. These findings emphasize the importance of supervised visitation in keeping children “physically” safe, but points to the need for continued efforts to develop effective intervention strategies for researching children’s “emotional/mental” safety in supervised visitation.
Examining Social Workers’ Perspective on Same-Sex Couple Adoptions

by Anne Kane Seaton

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph. D.
Members: MaryJo Melander, MSW, LISCW
Sheryl Rorvig, MSW, LISCW

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine if primary and secondary socialization are associated with social workers’ placement recommendations of a child with a same-sex couple. Thousands of children are waiting in foster homes to be adopted and the intent of same-sex couples to pursue adoption continues to rise. This study attempted to gather data from all social workers currently working in the field of adoption in Minnesota. Data was gathered from one private adoption agency in Minnesota and several counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The findings revealed no significant relationship between primary or secondary socialization and placement recommendations. However, potential implications for social work practice and education are discussed and calls for future research are suggested.
Spirituality and Religion in the Clinical Social Work Relationship

by Denise M. Shannon

Abstract

Spirituality and religion are important issues for the social work profession and social work education. This study examined social work practitioners’ views on the integration of spirituality and religion in the clinical relationship, as well as factors that influenced the use of spiritual interventions in practice. The sample (N=33) of randomly selected Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers from Minnesota completed a 44 item quantitative questionnaire. The survey measured the use of spiritual interventions in practice, attitudes about integrating spirituality and religion into social work, personal spiritual or religious engagement, and level of social work training on issues of spirituality. The results revealed that social work training, personal belief, and CSWE mandates for the inclusion of spiritual diversity curriculum did not correlate to a greater use of spiritual interventions with clients. There was, however, a positive correlation between practitioner personal belief and attitudes about the inclusion of spirituality issues in social work practice. Grounding this discussion in the core values of the social work profession was highlighted as an effective method for impacting practitioner attitude and practice interventions. This study calls for further research of best practice methods in social work education and for qualitative investigation to more deeply explore practitioner comfort and confidence integrating spirituality and religion in social work practice.
The Impact of Animal Assisted Therapy on Nursing Home Residents

by Anne E. Shibilski

Research Committee

Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D.
Members: Denise Morcomb, LICSW
Rochelle Rottenberg, LISW

Abstract
Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a goal directed intervention in which an animal meeting specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process (Delta Society). This study utilizing surveys was done to determine the perceptions of nursing home residents in Minnesota toward AAT. The surveys addressed resident’s experiences with AAT by identifying the impacted psychosocial factors such as self esteem, mood, relationship building, and communication as well as physical factors such as getting out of bed and level of exercise. Statistical analysis revealed that respondents’ answers coincide with the findings in the literature that AAT reduces anxiety, fear, despair, loneliness and isolation. Respondent’s state that AAT helps connect them to others as well as connect them to positive things, such as a pet they had as a child. Further research is needed to strengthen the validity of these results with a larger sample size and a variety of animal therapists. Future research is also needed to measure the effects over a greater span of time.
Strategies and Tools used by Therapists to Determine Whether Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse Engage in Hidden Deliberate Self-Harm Behaviors

by Megan L. Sigmon

Research Committee: 
Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members: Richard Ryberg, Ph.D.
Joan Schafer, M.A., L.P

Abstract
The self-harm assessment process that therapists use when working with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse was examined. Drawing from self-harm assessment tools found in the literature and relevant empirical evidence, the study sought to determine whether or not these tools were actually used by clinicians in practice. The research involved a non probability, snowball sample. Purposive sampling was used and the essence of six clinicians’ experiences was the focus of this qualitative study. The study was designed to determine which tools are being used to assess for deliberate self-harm. If tools were not being used, this study sought to determine how clinicians assess for deliberate self-harm. Clinicians did not report the use of any self-harm assessment tools and endorsed the client/therapist relationship as the most critical component to disclosure of deliberate self-harm. This was not consistent with the literature review, which did not stress the importance of the therapeutic relationship to the disclosure of self-harm. The complexities of self-harm definitions were also apparent in this study. Clinicians did not conceptualize self-harm in the same way, which resulted in discussion about how self-harm should be defined. This study endorses the use of Turp’s (2003) Self-Care – Self-Harm Continuum Model, which states that self-harm exists on a continuum of severity. The findings of this study suggest that clinicians need a framework from which to define self-harm in order to best treat this increasingly common behavior. Future research is encouraged to use clear definitional parameters in order to measure similar phenomenon. Recommendations for clinical practice are articulated.
College Coaches: Attitudes about Eating Disorders among Female Athletes

by Rebecca J. Sorenson

Research Committee:      Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D, LMFT
Members: Jane Hurley-Johncox, MSW, LICSW
Susan Gessner, MSW, LCSW

Abstract

The presence of eating disorders in the athletic environment, particularly the college athletic environment, is a complex problem with multiple factors. The purpose of this project was to explore the relationship between coaches, athletes and eating disorders. This study sought to gain the coach’s perspective on the problem of eating disorders, what strategies coaches are implementing, and what coaches need more of in terms of resources and education related to eating disorders. This study consisted of a qualitative interview with six college coaches of sports with a higher prevalence of eating disorders: swimming, cross country, and gymnastics. Data were analyzed using inductive and deductive approaches. The interviews were transcribed, and codes and themes were organized from the interview responses. The codes and themes were then connected back to the literature review. The findings indicated that the literature presented an accurate scope of the problem of eating disorders in the athletic environment, but was limited in strategies, resources and interventions being implemented by coaches. These findings demonstrate the need to increase the availability of awareness and education about eating disorders in the athletic environment, and resources for coaches who are working with females at risk for developing eating disorders.
Culturally Competent Attitudes and Behaviors of Hospice Workers in Minnesota

by Anna L. Splady

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, PhD.
Members: George Baboila, LICSW
Rachel Seiffert, RN

Abstract
Disparity in hospice use between majority and minority populations has been cited in the literature for over 20 years. The literature supports that one of the contributing factors for this disparity is the lack of cultural competency of hospice workers. This study examined the current level of culturally competent attitudes and behaviors of hospice workers in Minnesota. A total of 45 hospice workers from five hospice agencies that serve counties with large numbers of minorities participated in this study. An internet link was sent to the employees at these agencies via email and the survey was conducted online. The survey consisted of demographic questions and the Cultural Competence Assessment Tool (CCA), developed by researcher Stephanie Schim, PhD. and used with her permission. The findings indicated that hospice workers had a high level of cultural awareness and sensitivity but a lower level of culturally competent behaviors. All respondents but one had been through one or more diversity trainings. Respondents with diversity training at a conference/seminar scored significantly higher on the CCA than respondents with other types of training. All respondents had worked with clients from diverse groups in the past year. However, most respondents reported having fewer than 10% minorities on their current caseload. In conclusion, hospice workers and agencies need to continue to address cultural competency and encourage both cultural awareness and culturally competent behavior.
Reintegration Issues Soldiers Experience Upon Return From Service in a Combat Zone

by Kristen M. Storlie and Eric E. Strom

Research Committee: Chairs: Michael Chovanec, Ph. D.  
                        Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.  
Members: Randy Herman, Ed.D, LICSW  
         Mark Frenzel, LICSW

Abstract

For veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the ability to successfully reintegrate after having served has been affected by a multitude of stressors, including military protocol, community response, and social and family response. These lingering effects of this war zone exposure have become a growing concern for mental health clinicians who have direct contact with the veterans and their families. The purpose of this project was to determine whether one specific active duty Army unit portrayed the same reintegration difficulties as those in current and previous research. For this research, surveys were distributed to members of the 101st Airborne Division’s Human Resource Company; sixty-one completed surveys were returned to the researchers for use in this research. These surveys were used to gauge a soldier’s self-perception of psychological and social health before and after their deployment to Iraq. This non-combat support unit had served a 15-month tour of duty in Balad, Iraq. The findings of this research indicate that for the soldiers of this unit, their self-perceptions remained relatively consistent for both pre and post deployment. Findings also showed that soldiers were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the Army’s system of reintegration. These findings show that while it is too early to determine long-term psychological effects of their service, these soldiers view themselves as sustaining no immediate mental health concerns. This study reveals that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan impact the veterans of these wars differently and that each of the soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines returning must be evaluated individually. For those working in the mental health field, this is especially pertinent as more war veterans may potentially be seeking mental health services in the future.
Practice Implications when Social Workers Lack Knowledge and Skills regarding Substance Abuse

by Jennifer A. Thielges

Research Committee:
Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph. D.
Members: James Stolz, LICSW
Rosemary Froehle, LICSW

Abstract
Social workers encounter many situations which are impacted by substance abuse, yet there appears to be little training offered to this profession on that topic during formal education. This may be partially due to curricula being so broad based that it is hard to squeeze in another subject, or an implication that the problem of substance abuse is still denied to an extent. This paper explored social workers’ training, attitudes and experience about substance abuse. Findings were consistent with the literature and suggest that there is not enough education offered in graduate schools of social work, that attitude toward substance abusers improves with increased training and confidence levels of social workers and distinct roles of practitioners prohibit training across both disciplines. Additional themes that emerged include collaboration between service providers and advantages of both social work and substance abuse counselor specialties. This study also touches on the importance of understanding dual diagnoses and recognition of the interplay of mental illness and substance abuse during therapy. Although this study broadens understanding of the implications when substance abuse is not addressed, additional research is suggested in order to further substantiate the need for increased instruction about addiction in social work curricula and a deeper understanding of the dynamics between substance abuse and other issues which bring clients to social work service providers. Results of that research could lead to better outcomes for clients.
Collaboration Strategies Between Mental Health Practitioners and Psychiatrists

by Joseph Toth

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: George V. Baboila, MSW, LICSW
John Sabino MSW, LICSW

Abstract

This study explored collaboration strategies between psychotherapists and medical doctors. It examined how professionals in the field of psychotherapy and medicine use collaboration in their process of communication. Previous studies on collaboration between psychotherapists and medical doctors have found that strains exist in their collaborative dynamic and this research largely supports previous findings. Four psychiatrists, two mental health social workers and one psychotherapist participated in this study. This study found that collaboration between psychiatrists and mental health professionals is beneficial, as most doctors say they are open to collaborating with non-medical professionals. Yet, friction still exists because medical doctors assert their legitimacy and status in the collaborative process. The issue of time constraints and client medication were two more issues that were found to be significant.
Mothers’ Experiences of Long-Term Homelessness in Minnesota: Policy and Practice Implications

by Keimi Umezu

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D.
Members: Elizabeth Hinz, MSW
Ann Masten, Ph.D.

Abstract

Using a qualitative descriptive research design this research sought to learn from mothers’ experiences of long-term homelessness. Mothers who lived in a supportive housing program at the time of the study and who have experienced long-term homelessness were invited to participate in this study. The participants included in this study were mothers who have experienced long-term homelessness as defined by the state of Minnesota, have been in stable housing for at least three months at the time of the study and have lived in an emergency shelter with at least one of their children. The data of interviews with six mothers were included in this study. Mothers were asked about what services or programs were most beneficial to while staying at an emergency shelter and what they believe helped them access and maintain stable housing. Although this research looked at what led mothers to long-term homelessness, the focus was on how programs or policies could be improved in order to best help families experiencing homelessness. Mothers were specifically asked about their experiences with homelessness and how they were able to find and maintain stable housing. Participants were also asked if they have any recommendations for service providers as to how best help people who experience long-term homelessness. Overall, findings suggest that the combination of affordable housing and a range of support staff were most beneficial in finding and maintaining stable housing. Findings suggest that policy makers and service providers should continue to provide a more holistic approach when offering services to families experience long-term homelessness. This should include offering both affordable housing as well as providing families with needed support. Recommendations for further research and implications for social work are also addressed.
Veterinary Social Work: The Veterinarian’s Perspective

by Kari L. Vacinek

Research Committee:       Chair:    Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members:    Diane Bauer, L.I.C.S.W.
            Mike Henson, D.V.M.

Abstract
Pets play an important role in many people’s lives but what happens when this bond breaks or is threatened? People may have intense feelings and decisions to make about their pets. Veterinary social workers are used to help pet owners deal with these heavy emotions and help in the decision-making process on treatment. This study looks at veterinary social work from the perspective of the veterinarian. The researcher interviewed four veterinarians who work in schools that had a collaboration with a social work department. The veterinarians were asked how they utilized the social worker in their practice. The findings were that veterinarians used social workers for their clients to help with decision-making, when they had strong emotions. They also utilized them for case consultation and communication rounds with students. An interesting finding was that social workers were utilized by the staff for their own emotional support.
The Experience of Providers Working With Latinas In Domestic Violence Situations

by Yesenia Velazquez

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila M. Brommel, Ph.D, LISW
Members: Abby Kirschner, LICSW
Marisela I. Tototzintle, MSW

Abstract
Domestic violence as a social problem does not discriminate. All women, regardless of ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, or socioeconomic status can fall victim to domestic violence. However, some women are generally more vulnerable than others. Copeland and Heilemann (2005) suggested that Latinas are less likely to seek assistance and utilize resources than their Anglo counterparts. At the same time, other researchers have found stressors common for immigrant Latinas that increase the risk of domestic abuse (Ammar et al., 2005; Hancock, 2006).

The following study will explore the experience of providers working with Latinas in domestic violence situations. This descriptive quantitative research utilized an anonymous online survey questionnaire. The survey, consisting mostly of open-ended questions, was emailed to two organizations that serve Latino families in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. Of 54 possible respondents, a total of 15 surveys were completed, for a 28% response rate.

Most survey respondents provide services specifically to Latinas. Language was a barrier identified for service providers, and this study suggests service in the Latina’s primary language is the biggest gap in services to that population. Fear of deportation was also identified as a factor that impacts a Latina’s ability to seek help for domestic violence situations. With the Latino population growing at a fast pace, education, training and expertise on the Latino culture is needed more than ever.
PTSD: Responding to Gender Differences Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

by Debra A. Viehauser

Research Committee:      Chair:   Ed Bonnie, Ph. D., LP; LMFT
Members:   Kathy Erb Caron, MSW, LICSW
Lorie Lahr Moulds, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

In 1980 the DSM-III introduced and identified the anxiety disorder known as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Feminists became critical of the narrow scope of experiences considered traumatic on the basis of DSM-III criteria. They pointed to evidence that traumatic events were not uncommon or limited to what was currently suggested in the DSM. This paper will explore gender differences in terms of PTSD symptoms and how CBT can be used to treat men and women effectively who present with symptoms of PTSD. It will explore whether gender needs to be considered when structuring CBT in the therapy process. This study placed special emphasis on gender differences in terms of symptoms and trauma experience. The data included information collected through 8 interviews with practicing health care professionals who work directly with clients experiencing PTSD. This study showed that CBT can be used successfully to treat both men and women who present with PTSD. Although their symptoms may be manifested differently, it is possible to tailor each client’s therapy in a way that will allow them to understand and manage their symptoms. The results of this study also showed that the type of trauma experience played a greater role than gender when considering the structure of CBT in the treatment of PTSD. The first responsibility for clinicians may be to recognize how these symptoms are manifested in regard to gender.
Trauma Assessment and Treatment of African American Women Who Experience Domestic Violence

by Sabrina Walker

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Denise Morcomb, MSW, LICSW
Amy L. Teske

Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory study was threefold: It explored what trauma looks like among African American women, it determined whether mental health practitioners and advocates were identifying trauma as an effect of domestic violence and it identified how mental health practitioners and advocates were currently addressing trauma among African American women who are victims of domestic violence. This study also addressed that there is evidence that domestic violence has a significant impact on African American women’s mental health and that there is some evidence that domestic violence may lead to PTSD. Using a qualitative survey by SurveyMonkey, 17 mental health respondents were administered a survey online. Each respondent was asked 13 questions surrounding their assessment, treatment and interventions to domestic violence. The findings revealed that, 1) nine of the sample informally assessed their clients; 2) eight reported that they make referrals instead of treating their clients; 3) 13 of the sample had no intervention strategies and 4) 15 reported “yes” to having African American clients that were diagnosed with PTSD. Implications for further training in assessment, treatment and to develop culturally specific interventions for African American women who are victims of domestic violence are discussed.
Impact of Domestic Violence on Women and Children

by Rebecca L. Windschitl

Research committee: 
Chair: Ed Bonnie, Ph.D., LP, LMFT
Members: Anne Yakle, LGSW
Erik Sievers, LICSW

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to discover opinions from professional participants who has worked with women and children in domestic violence relationships. Six therapists from a community mental health center were interviewed. The research used was an interpretive approach through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The research provides numerous perspectives on how domestic violence affects a mother’s parenting abilities, along with the children in these situations reaction to it. It was discovered clinicians did agree that children who witnessed a domestic violent relationship were affected socially and behaviorally, along with the attachment to their mother’s was being greatly affected. Clinical implications on how to work more effectively with this population are discussed.
Challenges Veterans Face When Transitioning into a Minnesota Veterans Home: Through the Eyes of the Social Workers

by Patricia O. Winstead

Research Committee:                                      Chair:  David Roseborough, PH.D.  
            Members:  Gay Moldow, MSW  
                        William Korchik, MD

Abstract

The social science literature on transitioning into a long term care facility highlights the difficulties individuals may experience in their move to institutional care. Themes identified included: Losses, support systems, depression, attitudes, and lifestyle changes. United States veterans differ from the general population in certain characteristic which may impact their transition into a Minnesota Veterans Home. Minnesota Veterans Home residents are predominantly male and have a higher incidence of mental illness, substance dependency, and suicide risk.

Using literature supported template questions, this study reports the results of interviews with social workers working in one of the five Minnesota Veterans Homes. Similar to the previous research, this study reveals that depression, loss of independence, support, attitudes, and lifestyle changes are all factors that hamper a healthy transition.

This research is important for social work practice and program development. Results support transition difficulties can be predicted, but more importantly may be prevented or reduced in severity. Programs for transition assistance can be developed using empirical research, as detailed in this study, to ensure person centered approaches in treatment and interventions during the transitioning phase.
The impact of trauma work on clinicians’ own childrearing

by A. Woodstrom

Research Committee:
Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, Ph. D., LICSW
Members: Jennifer Tagg, MA LMFT
Teresa Largaespada, LICSW

Abstract
This study examined how working with traumatized children impacted clinician’s own childrearing practices. Using a qualitative design, five participants were interviewed. Participants discussed their experience as clinicians, who work with traumatized children and as parents. The participants in this study were clinicians who: had a current or recent caseload, in which their clients are/were children who have experienced trauma in their lifetime and who have children of their own. The findings indicated that working with traumatized children impacts the way clinicians raise their own children. The findings also indicated that the awareness level, family unit structure, environmental influences, protection level, role as a therapist and role as a parent are all impacted when working with traumatized children. The findings were similar to previous research which found that working with traumatized children impacts clinician’s lives outside of work.
Hmong parents recognize symptoms of depression in their adolescent children

by Wendy Maicua-LaujNtxuam Yang

Research Committee:
Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.
Members: Randolph Herman, Ed.D.
Barbara Schifano

Abstract
Depression among Hmong adolescents is a specific mental health issue that Hmong parents seem unable to recognize and/or seek treatment for. Many Hmong parents view symptoms of depression as laziness. In the Western culture, depression is viewed as a sad, hopeless, discouraged state. For example, a person may feel hopelessness, loss of interest, and thoughts of suicide. But when an adolescent experiences depression, this disrupts his or her ability to function, and may indicate a serious problem. Depression can be hard to recognize. For adolescents, depression can be especially hard to detect, because adolescents are still developing their ability to understand emotions. It is also difficult for Hmong parents to recognize their adolescent’s symptoms of depression, especially for those Hmong parents who are less educated about mental health concerns and those who do not believe in Western mental illness. The research question in this study focused on the ability of Hmong parents to recognize symptoms of depression in their adolescent children. Questionnaires were used to gather data from local Hmong parents. The questionnaire results allowed for depression in their adolescent children. The respondents were predominantly women. The results shown that people who have knowledge of depression were capable of knowing and recognizing symptoms of depression. Also, the results indicated that the respondents who have more education have less concern if their son and daughter spent significant time alone.
The College of St. Catherine and University of St. Thomas

The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse on Men and Their Adult Intimate Relationships

by Julie Zyskowski-Merwin

Research Committee:
Chair: Ed Bonnie, Ph.D., LP, LMFT
Members: Steve Banks, MSW, LICSW
Sharell Comnick, RN

Abstract
This research explored the impact of child sexual abuse (CSA) on men sexually abused as children (MSAC) and the efficacy of therapy in lessening that impact. The research attempted to answer two main questions. First, what is the impact of CSA on the adult intimate relationships of MSAC? Second, does psychotherapy effectively mitigate the negative impacts of CSA on the adult intimate relationships of MSAC? The research was conducted by surveying therapists regarding their experience with adult males sexually abused as children. The findings showed that 17.4% of participants’ male clients were sexually abused as children. This abuse resulted in a range of psychological and behavioral problems, including low self esteem, anger, depression, chemical dependency, impaired sense of self, and difficulty with trust. A vast majority of participants (96.4%) stated that child sexual abuse impacts men’s adult intimate relationships “To some extent” or “To a great extent”. And, 82.1% of respondents chose “To some extent” or “To a great extent” when asked how much therapy helped to mitigate the effects of child sexual abuse. Implications of this study on the practice of social work include the indication that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is most effective at treating MSAC, that MSAC may be more willing to open up to male therapists, and that social workers need to be better trained on how to treat MSAC. More research is required to test these implications.