Clinical Research Paper
Abstracts

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School of Social Work
St. Catherine University
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Factors that Contribute to African American Student Success: The School Social Worker Perspective

by Quinnita Abraham

Research Committee:
Chair: Mike Chovanec, Ph.D.
Members: Mary Tinucci, LICSW, MSW
Rebecca Merton

Abstract
There are several school districts within the state of Minnesota but this study focused on the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) because of the current performance level of African American students within the district. SPPS is considered one of the most diverse districts within the state of Minnesota. The qualitative research study attempted to assess the factors that contribute to African American Student Success. Five interviews were conducted with School Social Workers within SPPS. The participants were asked a total of eight questions regarding their professional experience working with African American students. The respondents supported previous research regarding the need for more in-school interventions over out-of-school interventions. Also, the respondents agreed with the importance of the social work education curriculum as it relates to their work with students from diverse backgrounds. The respondents also talked about the importance of family and community involvement as it relates to student success. Throughout the study, Social Economic Status was consider the most influential factor to student success.
**Hoarding Behaviors in Children: Social Workers’ Perspectives**

by Brianne S. Agan

Research Committee:
Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Wendy Baker, MSW, LICSW
Jennifer Sommer, MSW, LICSW

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of clinical social workers about the assessment and treatment of hoarding behaviors in children. The current disseminated definition of hoarding is defined as an individual’s acquisition and failure to discard large quantities of possessions which appear useless or of limited value (Frost, Hartl, Christian, & Williams, 1995). Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with two social workers who discussed their perceptions of hoarding behaviors in children and utilized case material to elaborate on their assessment and treatment process. A different definition of hoarding was provided by each participant in the context of the case examples. One viewed hoarding as the collecting of possessions, while the other viewed hoarding as the collection of food. Attachment, trauma and cognitive behavioral theories informed their assessment process and treatment interventions. Both included the individual and caregiver in their approaches. As the two case examples explored, the hoarding behaviors of the children contributed to challenges in academic, social and emotional functioning, as evidenced by low school attendance, problems with peers and acting aggressively when hoarded items were touched. Consistent with findings in the literature, social workers’ understanding of hoarding behaviors in children influences how they assess and treat the behavior. Further exploration based in clinical experience and empirical research is needed in order to expand the understanding of hoarding behavior and its treatment among children.
The Journey “Home”: Implication for Social Work and Re-entry

by Julie Alsum

Research Committee: Chair: Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Sandy Parnell, MSW
Christine Furlong

Abstract
Ex-offenders are in a double bind situation, having to unlearn the social norms and rules of prison culture and relearn the social norms of our communities as they navigate their way back into the fabric of society. This research explored how deculturation impacts the experience of ex-offenders transitioning back “home.” Research data for this study was gathered through surveys distributed by various re-entry supportive service agencies. The survey was formatted with both open and closed ended questions and participation was voluntary. Out of 100 hundred surveys distributed, 19 were completed and returned. The data gathered in this research reinforced that re-adjusting to communities from prison culture can be a difficult journey. Most respondents in this research identified a desire to give back to society; each individual to some degree struggles to re-define his/her role in society. Incongruence in their hopes and the reality of challenges to reintegrate were often confusing and defeating. Challenges were often further shaped by the roles and barriers society places on them. Re-entrants need supports that will enable them to manage the emotions of adjustment, find housing and employment as they re-define their identity, and regain confidence in their ability to contribute productively to their communities. This study concludes by exploring the implications for social work, finding that social work could provide the essential elements to help individuals and families cope with incarceration, and working with individuals, families and communities to fully integrated ex-offenders back into society.
Adolescent Residential Treatment: Assessing Characteristics for Placement

by Emily A. Anderson

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D.
Members: Mike McCawley, M.A, LSW
Andrea Andersen, MSW, LGSW

Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to explore how characteristics and gender contribute to how adolescents who are referred to residential treatment centers have changed over time. This case record review study is based on a secondary data analysis of client data collected from two time periods: between 2006 and 2009, and 1995 and 1998. Data was collected regarding each resident’s age, gender, primary race, location prior to admission, number of out-of-home placements, payer for services, legal status, length of stay, primary, secondary, and tertiary diagnoses, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and interventions. Findings document a connection between current literature and this research study, specifically in the area of gender comparison. Implications for future clinical social work practice include the need to place value on residential treatment programs to ensure access to communities to mental health treatment. Suggestions for future research is to continue to study characteristics of adolescents being referred to residential treatment programs and evaluating efficacy to determine the best approach when treating this population.
Abstract

The disparity of the number of individuals with mental health issues in the criminal justice system leads to social workers having more contact with this specific population. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team members’ perceptions of offenders with mental health issues, through a survey of the members of the team. The survey included two standardized instruments, the Community Attitudes Toward the Mentally Ill (Taylor & Dear, 1981) and the Attitudes Toward Mentally Ill Offenders II (Church II et al., 2009). Of the 152 surveys were sent to 14 ACT teams in Minnesota, 47 were returned (30.9 percent).

There some significant findings related to the relationships between the sub-scales of the CAMI and the ATMIO II. First, as the sub-scale negative stereotypes increased, the sub-scales of authoritarianism and social restrictiveness increased and the sub-scales of benevolence and community mental health ideology decreased. Second, as the sub-scale score rehabilitation/compassion increased, the sub-scale of authoritarianism increased and the sub-scale of community mental health ideology decreased. Third, as the sub-scale community risk increased, the sub-scale of social restrictiveness increased and the sub-scale of community mental health ideology decreased. As the total scale score increased, the sub-scale of authoritarianism and the sub-scale of social restrictiveness increased and the sub-scale of benevolence and the sub-scale of community mental health ideology decreased.

Overall, Assertive Community Treatment team members generally had a positive perception of offenders with mental illness when compared to the general public. Implications of this study are for further examination of social workers perceptions, further examination of how demographics of age and gender factor in to the formation of attitudes and the examination of other disciplines, such as corrections, attitudes toward offenders with mental illness.
Inadequate Response to Complicated Grief: Training Issues Explored

by Elizabeth M Anez

Research Committee:  
Chair: Randy Herman, Ed.D.  
Members:  
Ron Kiesler, MSSW  
Ogden Rogers, Ph.D.

Abstract
Is the inadequate response to complicated grief, in part, due to insufficient training of master’s level clinicians? The process for this analysis was to interview eight master’s level clinicians within the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. This study analyzed how clinicians assess for complicated grief and whether specific training is required to differentiate between complicated grief and other mental health disorders. This study used a qualitative approach to interviewing clinicians in agencies chosen from a convenience sample. Narrative information from interviews was transcribed and subjected to a content analysis to inductively explore themes from the sample. The findings indicated that most clinicians got into the field of psychotherapy because they wanted to make a difference in people’s lives, however over 50% of the participants actually knew what the term ‘complicated grief’ was. It was further indicated by the participants that they felt a high percentage of their clients were experiencing grief of some kind along with what their presenting issues were. Most of the clients that the clinicians saw were diagnosed with either depression and/or anxiety although if they were suffering from grief concerns, and the reason for this was that depression and/or anxiety has its own diagnostic code and is reimbursable for agencies. All but one participant indicated that they were not exposed to a class in their graduate programs on grief and the one who took a trauma class took it because of having an interest in the topic as an elective. Implications derived from this study indicates the need for the following: clinicians a better understanding of complicated grief, a required class in graduate programs on grief, the need for post-graduate training for clinicians, and the need for future research to analyze the pros and cons for making complicated grief its own diagnostic category.
Ethical Decision Making in Agencies: A Focus on Accreditation

by Sara L. Baker

Research Committee:          Chair:        Sheila M Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
                             Members:       Joan Reibel, LICSW
                                             Michael Peterson, LICSW

Abstract
Social workers in practice encounter ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. Social workers rely on the NASW Code of Ethics to guide them in practice, but the agency has to rely on other ethical practices to guide them in decision-making. Strategies that support ethical practice in agencies include evidence-based practice, ethics audit, or otherwise known as “risk management tool, and accreditation. This qualitative study explores the current ethical practices used in Minnesota agencies and their view of effective ethical decision-making tools. The purpose of this study was to explore ethical decision making as supported by agency accreditation. A semi-structured interview was conducted using a set of written questions drawn from themes identified in the literature. This study used a content analysis, in which open coding was used to identify themes and ideas were categorized to flow conceptually. The findings from this study confirmed that participants view accreditation as a supportive practice. However, the participants viewed other practices that were also supportive. Findings from this study suggest that participants overall held the view that the agency should have choice in implementing various ethical practices. Implications for practice and further research were discussed.
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Child Welfare Social Workers Knowledge and Intervention Strategies

by Cimena Rogers and Melanie Bayer Witthoft

Research Committee: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Laura Newton, MSW
        Cathy Bruer-Thompson, MSW

Abstract
This study sought to investigate FASD knowledge, intervention strategies, and the implementation of these interventions in county child welfare workers’ practice with clients diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. According to the literature review, there is significant research supporting the hypothesis that human service professionals and child welfare social workers are not well prepared to provide services to clients diagnosed with FASD. In this research a total of 195 surveys were completed by child welfare and human service professionals from Ramsey and Hennepin Counties in Minnesota. The results of the survey indicated three distinctive elements of the research question, participant definition and identification of FASD, interventions for FASD, and competency of child welfare social workers. The research findings suggest that the county employees surveyed have more knowledge than these researchers’ hypothesized. However, the researchers’ attempt to identify the beliefs of respondents in regards to the myths surrounding FASD concluded that there is still a misunderstanding in regards to the cause and affects of FASD.
Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in a patient’s end of life experiences from the perspective of hospice social workers. Hospice social workers were asked to share their experiences with patients who experienced the dying process and how they incorporated the patients’ spirituality in their care. Interview questions were formed based on Doka’s (1993) three spiritual needs of the dying person: \textit{to search for the meaning of life, to die appropriately, and to find hope that extends beyond the grave}. Two hospice social workers were interviewed and a case study approach was applied to the analysis and to present the findings. Findings showed that spiritual needs and the social workers’ ability to meet those needs played a role in the dying process. Participants noted what they observed as they helped their patients to meet the three spiritual needs. They discussed how their patients’ spiritual beliefs played a role in the search for meaning of life. They also observed that their patients experienced death according to how they lived their lives. As social workers they helped their patients to find comfort in their spiritual beliefs and find hope for themselves and their families once they died. Participants also offered recommendations to future hospice social workers including self care, knowing oneself spiritually, and knowing resources available for meeting spiritual needs.
Minnesota Nursing Home Social Worker Reports on Occupational Stress

by Emily K. Blaser

Research Committee: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Chair: Tona Willand, LICSW
Members: Katie Benner, LGSW

Abstract
Occupational stress can present itself in nursing home social workers as both physical and mental health issues and concerns. Previous research has shown that occupational stress is a known and significant risk in many current occupations. Little research has been completed looking specifically at the affects of occupational stress as it relates to nursing home social workers. The literature review found that many factors could contribute to current and future occupational stress of nursing home social workers including: a clear understanding of occupational stress, the role of the social worker in long term care, the long term care environment, increased number of older adults seeking long term care, and burn out and job satisfaction. This research explored the occupational stress of nursing home social workers in St. Paul and Minneapolis Minnesota, specifically looking at stress and coping skills identified by the nursing home social worker respondents.

A survey of Minnesota nursing home social workers was developed and conducted to compile the following factors. Of 97 surveys that were sent out to nursing home social workers in St. Paul and Minneapolis Minnesota 54 respondents returned completed surveys for a response rate of 56 %. Respondents reported an average of 4 out of 5 level of daily work related stress, specifically 39 % of respondents report stress coming from working with difficult resident family dynamics, and 24 % of respondents report feelings of lack of management support. 57 % of respondents reported social work coworker consultation regarding the stress as the most effective coping strategy. The results of this survey could not be compared to previous research that had been done in this area, as none could be identified. The results of this survey indicate a need for future research related to the occupational stress of nursing home social workers, as it is an important and growing field of social work.
Barriers to Treatment of Mental Health Disorders in Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

by Michelle Bollinger

Research Committee: Chair: Phillip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Robert Meyer
Crystal Hughes, MSW

Abstract

Individuals with co-occurring developmental disabilities and mental health disorders are a particularly vulnerable population of people served by both mental health agencies and agencies providing developmental disabilities services. Individuals with co-occurring developmental disabilities and mental health disorders often have difficulties receiving appropriate services to address their mental health needs due to numerous barriers. As a result of these barriers, these individuals pose major service delivery challenges that require a coordinated array of treatment interventions and supports that necessitate the collaborative involvement of providers from both service systems.

Individuals with these co-occurring disorders face barriers to appropriate mental health services which are related to misdiagnosis or under diagnosis of mental health disorders, undertaughtn professionals, inadequate services and a lack of coordination and collaboration across service systems.

The aim of this study is to identify and examine the barriers that exist in the treatment of mental health disorders in individuals with developmental disabilities as perceived by mental health professionals and Qualified Mental Retardation Professionals that work with people with co-occurring conditions, in an effort to develop a productive partnership for systems change. The study identifies barriers to treatment of mental health disorders in individuals with developmental disabilities in existing service systems, describes components of an “ideal” system of care, and makes recommendations for systems change.
How May Spirituality Strengthen the Resilience of People Experiencing the Stress of Homelessness

by Cathy Boyd

Abstract

The qualitative study looked at how social service practitioners thought people who experience homelessness use spirituality to strengthen resilience. Six participants from two Mid-western, metropolitan social service agencies answered a series of 10 questions that were framed at investigating to what extent does spirituality seem to help people who experience homelessness cope, how it helps cope and what are the spiritual practices that appear to support spirituality. It was found that spirituality seems to help people who experience homelessness obtain a positive framework to view themselves and the world. Additionally, and most importantly it was found that spiritual practices seem to be an important part of strengthening resilience and improving functioning. The study contributes to the growing body of research that shows that spirituality is a relevant resource that may have practical implications in the clinical social work profession.
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder School Social Workers’ and Elementary Teachers’ Perspectives

by Janine M Brady

Research Committee:

Chair: Phillip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Emily Vosejpka, MSW, LICSW
Melissa Reed, Ed.S., Psychologist

Abstract
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a mental health disorder that is often diagnosed in childhood and adolescence. There have been many previous studies conducted about ADHD in different settings, medications, therapy, and labeling. In this study, interviews were conducted with elementary school social worker and elementary education teachers regarding, diagnoses, classroom interventions, labeling, and general behaviors.

The study finds that school social workers and elementary teachers interviewed had similar knowledge about ADHD. Elementary teachers and school social workers also use similar classroom interventions with the children with the diagnoses and describe similar general behaviors of students with ADHD. This study is useful for professionals that work within an elementary school setting. The classroom interventions that described within this study have worked within the classroom setting for children with the diagnoses.
Time to Go: The emotional price a child pays

by April L. Brandt

Abstract
Domestic violence impacts all members of the family. This study explores how a mother’s timing for fleeing an abusive relationship impacts her children at different developmental stages. Using a qualitative method of data collection, five practitioners were interviewed. Emotional dysregulation, parentification, regression, and modeling were identified as key themes. Data suggest that dysregulation and modeling impact children of all ages, while parentification is more often associated with older children, and regression is more closely linked to younger children. Implications for social work practice and for future research are also discussed.
Greif and Loss in Adoption: A Qualitative Study of Adult Adoptees

by Jessica E. Brandt

Research Committee:

Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Heidi Wiste, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This study explored the experience of grief and loss in adoption for adult adoptees. The research examined the ways that adoptees mourn the loss of their birth family, how grief and loss impacted adoptees' decisions to search for birth parents and make contact, how communication in adoptive families affected experiences of grief and loss, and what factors have been helpful in moderating grief and loss for adoptees. This qualitative study with 10 participants used a semi-standardized interview format. Availability sampling and snowball sampling was used from the local community. Grounded theory techniques were used to analyze the transcribed interviews. Overall themes that emerged were adoptees' emotional experiences related to grief and loss, knowledge and thoughts about birth family and culture, process of searching and contact, other factors impacting grief and loss, and hopes and wishes. Open communication about feelings related to adoption and the responses of adoptive parents were identified as most significant in helping individuals to manage their grief and loss. These findings indicate the need for support and funding to be available to provide education for adoptive parents around grief and loss issues through pre-adoption and post-adoption support services and opportunities for adoptees to have the loss validated, in addition to the joys, in their adoption experience.
Mental Health Providers’ Perceptions of the Recovery Model and Recovery Oriented Services

by Larisa Breid

Research Committee:  Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Members: Keith DeRaad, Ph.D
            Ariana Hart, LICSW, CPRP

Abstract
Services focused on the mental health recovery model represent a shift in services from traditional, medically oriented mental health services. Consumer provider positions have been increasingly integrated into existing mental health programs to further support the recovery model. Little is known about how staff perceptions of recovery and consumer providers impact the shift toward recovery-oriented services. This study used a cross-sectional survey design and open-ended questions to gather staff perceptions of mental health recovery, the recovery-orientation of their services, and support for consumer providers. Borkin's (2000) Recovery Attitudes Questionnaire and O'Connell's (2005) Recovery Self Assessment were used to develop the survey in addition to items demonstrating support for consumer providers. A total of 37 social workers, nurses, psychologists, and psychiatrists in the mental health division of a Midwestern VA Medical Center participated in the study. Data analysis included both quantitative analyses and content analysis driven open coding of qualitative responses. The findings demonstrated that providers are generally supportive of the recovery model, and view services as recovery-oriented overall. Respondents varied in perceptions of how focused on life goals and client involvement services are. Support for consumer providers was evident, although responses varied greatly. There were no significant differences in perception based on profession or length of practice experience. Respondents identified benefits to recovery-oriented and consumer provided services such as role modeling and improved quality of life. Findings suggest a need for further education and new methods of evaluation in order to build support for recovery-oriented services.
School Social Workers’ Perspectives on the Risk Factors Associated with Adolescent Substance Abuse

by Jennifer E. Bulmer

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D.
Members: Valandra, LISW
Steve Banks, LICSW

Abstract
School social workers’ encounter many situations with adolescents that are impacted by substance abuse. The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of school social workers’ perspectives on the risk and protective factors associated with adolescent substance abuse. A quantitative survey of school social workers was created by this researcher and distributed to school social workers via a snowball sample. The findings from this study showed that school social workers’ believe that mental health issues and negative peer influences are the most important risk factors. Conversely, school social workers’ indentified clear rules from parents as being the most influential protective factor related to adolescent substance abuse. This study demonstrates a need for more research to be done on the risk and protective factors associated with adolescent substance abuse in order to help school social workers implement effective prevention and intervention programs.
Latinos’ Attitudes Toward Depression and Treatment

by Neri Diaz and Elizabeth Burgos

Research Committee:  
Chair: Catherine Marrs, Ph.D., LICSW  
Members: Thaddeus Mosqueda, MA, MSW  
Theresa McPartlin, LICSW

Abstract  
The current literature demonstrates a number of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and stigma that the Latino community has toward depression and treatment. Limited research has been conducted regarding mental health issues, especially depression, in the Latino community. The purpose of this study was to learn how Latinos view depression, what are some of the beliefs about depression, their preferred formal or informal treatment options for depression, and the barriers that Latinos may encounter in receiving treatment for depression. Using a qualitative design the researchers interviewed 18 participants from the Latino community living in a metropolitan city in the Midwest, that have experienced at least one episode of depression in their past without having current suicidal ideation. Participants were male and female Latinos who are 18 years and older. Participants were recruited from two Latino community agencies: 1) a non-profit community clinic serving Latinos and 2) a non-profit multi-service community agency that serves Latinos in the metro area. The researchers utilized the qualitative approach in order to obtain patterns in regards to how Latinos view depression and treatment. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structure interview guide in order to capture meaning and understanding of their experience with depression. The researchers utilized content analysis to analyze the data collected. The findings indicated that Latinos had negative attitudes toward depression and treatment prior to receiving professional help towards depression. The findings also indicated the importance of increasing awareness and education about depression and treatment in order to decrease the stigma and negative attitudes associated with depression within the Latino population.
The Role and Implications of Social Justice within Clinical Social Work Practice

by Heidi M. Cariveau, M.A.

Research Committee: Chair: Kendra Garrett, Ph.D.
Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW, LICSW
Gary Norman, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Social justice is a broad topic that many have a hard time defining. It also seems to be a challenge for professions, such as social work, where social justice is fundamental within the profession. The introduction of clinical social work has changed the way social workers are taught in schools and the jobs they may take in the field. Six clinical social workers were asked questions around the role and implications of social justice in their current clinical social work practice. Working within the medical, educational, or correctional system influences and can greatly effect a clinical social worker’s position and perspective of what social justice means to their practice. Social justice seemed absent and an optional inclusion from the work all of the participants were currently doing in their practice as clinical social workers. Social justice was not used in any definition of clinical social work by any of the six participants. Sadly, some participants recognized they had never thought about the role social justice had in their practice and found answering questions about social justice difficult. Only one participant could recall, which was in 1979, a specific class focused on social justice in there graduate school program. If clinical social work programs are not integrating social justice in school curriculums when educating clinical social work students, there is less likelihood that social justice will be prominent in their clinical practice. Clinical social workers and non clinical social workers all need to integrate social justice action into their social work position with the understanding that social justice is not a choice to incorporate but a must to work towards change.
Therapeutic Techniques Used by Social Workers Working with Geriatric Patients Coping with Ambiguous Loss

by Kayla Carlson

Abstract

This study explored types of ambiguous loss geriatric individuals may cope with as well as therapeutic techniques in which clinical social workers can use to assist this population. This was a quantitative study in nature and research was done through a literature review and survey process done with social workers practicing in the following settings: hospice and long-term care. During the literature review the nature of coping was described as the behavioral, cognitive, and psychosocial reaction one experiences related to change (Kliwer, 2008). Within the geriatric population, one may be facing change in a variety of ways. These changes may be in terms of physical loss, decline in cognitive functioning, psychosocial loss, and/or emotional stress. All of these items that one may deal with are types of ambiguous loss. The research study supported that the loss of a loved one as a significant form of ambiguous loss a geriatric individual faces. As a clinical social worker it is one’s role to offer support, empathy, and active listening while assisting individuals. This quantitative study explored therapeutic techniques in which social workers can use to assist geriatric individual coping with ambiguous loss with the therapeutic techniques of active listening, reminiscence, empathy, and life review shown to be statistically significant.
Exploring the Treatment Approach and Delivery to Black Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

by Jessica M. Conner, LSW

Research Committee:

Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D.
Members: Sarah Burrows, LICSW
Amy Wood, LICSW

Abstract

PTSD is an immobilizing condition that affects a large number of U.S. veterans, especially black veterans. The purpose of this study was to explore how clinicians are approaching and delivering therapeutic services to black veterans diagnosed with PTSD. Seven clinicians from a Twin Cities hospital participated in qualitative interviews. Seven themes emerged naturally from the data: PTSD symptoms, prevalence rate of PTSD among black veterans, racism and discrimination, awareness of treatment barriers, clinician comfort in working with black veterans, benefits of working with a same race clinician, and responding to the needs of black veterans. Findings suggest that clinicians do not provide treatment to black veterans any differently than they do to their white counterparts. The matter of whether or not there should be a difference remains unresolved. Clinicians need to be aware of how the black veterans’ experiences, including racism and discrimination, impact their diagnosis and their treatment process.
Resiliency, a Window to Understanding the Upside of Job Loss

by James Contois

Research Committee:

Chair: Ken Root, Ph.D.
Members: Theresa Kelly McPartlin, MSW, LICSW
Robert M. Lawlor, MSW, LICSW

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore what factors affect an individual’s resiliency in the face of job loss. It is only recently that a more positive trend has been detected in the literature related to how persons experiencing job loss perceive themselves, their situation, and their future. Previous studies have concentrated mainly on the adverse effects of job loss, where workers are seen to suffer anger, frustration, the possibility of depression and family breakdown, and even suicide. But job loss is nothing new or uncommon in the United States or around the world and few if any escape that experience during a lifetime. So, while it is true that few other life transitions garner the attention afforded this phenomenon, especially when the rate of job loss is on the rise, the negative conclusion proffered by earlier studies appears outmoded today. This research takes a more balanced look at job loss and how an individual’s resiliency portends, a more normal, positive outcome for them, their family, and society.
Gerotranscendence: Reflections from Elders in the Community

by Christie M. Cuttell, LSW

Research Committee:          Chair:          W. Randolph Herman, Ed.D.
                              Members:          Kathleen Martin, MSW, LICSW
                              Reverend Amy Y. Luukkonen

Abstract
In western society, it is argued by the medical profession that the number of elderly diagnosed with depression should be double what it is and that under diagnosis is an issue. Lars Tornstam suggests that the symptoms the western, medical world often associates with depression are actually signs of a transcending process related to aging and eventually, dying. Tornstam calls this process Gerotranscendence and defines it as “A shift if meta-perspective, from a materialistic and pragmatic view of the world to a more cosmic one and transcendent one, normally accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction.” (Tornstam, 1997). This study used a qualitative format to query a selection of elders about this process. The importance of elder’s impressions and reflections on Gerotranscendence as a natural process of aging is especially important to the profession of the clinical social worker in their role as advocates and clinicians. Three men and five women over the age of seventy were interviewed using open-ended semi-structured interview questions. The study revealed themes about the respondent’s beliefs and thoughts regarding life changes related to Gerotranscendence as well as their unique perspective on later stages of life in general resulting in an increase in life satisfaction.
How do Professionals View the Effect of Poverty on a Child’s Ability to Learn?

by Thomas Cohen

Research Committee:  
Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.  
Members: Kathy Caron, MSW, LISCW  
Nathan Anderson

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate professionals in the schools perspective whether there is a link between families in poverty and child’s learning aptitude. The research will include a comprehensive review of past poverty on poverty and its impact it has on children learning ability. The study of the results includes responses given by Carlton County Social workers, Cloquet General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers in a rural district in Northern Minnesota State. Low social economic status is a contributing factor in children’s learning and social development. (Mayer, 1997). Socially, physically and mentally factors has had a tendency to be lacking in positive development because of residing in poverty. These factors may have the potential to influence children in a variety of negative ways including low test scores, increase behavior problems, increased chemical use, oppositional behaviors, and less parent involvement.

School districts and communities need to consider offering preventative interventions to young children and parents in order to help build a solid base of knowledge at an early age of development. Educating parents as well as students was another way to help families with low social economic status becomes successful learners and rid them of poverty by staying in school and getting a good education.
Medical Professionals Perspectives on a Potential Connection Between Borderline Personality Disorder, Frequent Somatic Complaints, and High Medical Utilization in a Rural Community

by Kerstin L. Cooley

Research Committee:  
Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.  
Members: Jolene Wirkus, Psy.D., L.P.  
Phil Voight, LICSW

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore medical professional’s perspectives on a potential connection between Borderline Personality Disorder, frequent somatic complaints, and high medical utilization in a rural community. The results from survey sent to Medical Doctors, Certified Nurse Practitioners, and Physician’s Assistants in a five county area (Cottonwood, Jackson, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock) of Southwestern Minnesota showed mixed results in the connections between Borderline Personality Disorder, frequent somatic complaints, and high medical utilization in a rural area. The participants; who were mostly medical doctors, aged 46-55, with minimal background in the mental health field; reported that they do have a moderate percentage of patients reporting to their clinics with frequent somatic complaints. They also reported that a moderate percentage of their patients with Borderline Personality Disorder and frequent somatic complaints that visit their clinics each week. The participants noted that they would like increased referral sources for mental health, more training in mental health and more time to spend with these patients. Findings were mostly consistent with the literature reviewed for this study. The sample size was small, so future research should focus on ways to obtain a larger sample size to make the findings more generalizable.
The Impact Expressive Art on School Age African American Boys

by Patrick Cunningham

Abstract
The literature on expressive arts in schools is sparse and research to support its growth is necessary. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the impact of expressive arts on school age African American boys in school-based mental health settings. An interview questions schedule was chosen to learn about the participant’s individual art experience working with African American boys. Data was collected through six interviews with five social workers and one teacher. The researcher used an inductive method to generate codes, which eventually became themes. The following six themes emerged include: creating a safe environment, using art for calming, using art to engage, self-empowerment, music and African American boys and barriers to expressive art. The findings indicated that all of the participants’ perceptions of expressive arts were intricately connected to students’ emotional and behavioral human development. Yet, little information exists on use of expressive arts programs to enhance emotional and behavioral feelings of this population through their cultural worldview. The significance of this study is to discover how the creative process might improve treatment, build therapeutic relationships, promote safe environment and increase academic achievement.
Posttraumatic Growth in Bereaved Parents

By Sarah Delzer

Research Committee:
Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph. D., LISW
Members: Diane Bauer, MSW, LICSW
Christine Lewis, RN, CNS, CT

Abstract
Losing a child is one of life’s most devastating losses and its impact can linger for years. The death of a child can shatter a parent’s worldview and drastically affect their parental identity, as well as the way they relate to others. Much of the research with bereaved parents has focused on the mental distress and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder that follows the death of a child. Parents may experience depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other mental distress symptoms, but less often recognized is the growth parents experience in the aftermath of their child’s death. The belief in this study was that positive changes bereaved parents experience in sense of self, relationships with others, and philosophy of life combine to create posttraumatic growth. In this study, I examined grief professionals’ perceptions of posttraumatic growth in bereaved parents, as well as how relationships with others, a shift in worldviews, and an evaluation of a new identity facilitate posttraumatic growth in parents who have lost a child. I did this by mailing a survey to 150 grief professionals who are members of the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support. This survey explored grief professionals’ opinions about how parents change in the areas of relationships with others, worldviews, and sense of self in the aftermath of the loss of their child. Using descriptive statistics and content analysis, I evaluated whether professionals believe growth occurs in parents after they lose a child. Results showed that grief professionals believe that parents’ relationships with others, worldviews, and sense of self definitely change following the loss of their child. Results also showed that positive changes are slightly more prevalent than negative changes. Finally, several additional themes about changes in relationships with others, worldviews, sense of self, and how professionals incorporate changes into their work with bereaved parents emerged from the survey results. Implications for social work practice and grief work in general are discussed.
Spousal Impressions of Anticipatory Grief After the Death of a Spouse with Terminal Illness

by Sara R. DeVos

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Rebecca Melhus, MSWEd.D.
Roxanne Wilson, Ph.D.(c)

Abstract

This study explored the commonalities between how spouses/partners felt knowing their loved one was dying and how they felt social workers and health care providers could have supported them more effectively. This research attempted to answer two questions. First, what are the common grief experiences of individuals whose spouses/partners have died from a terminal illness, and secondly, what are the surviving spouses’/partners’ thoughts on how social workers responded to their needs, issues and concerns. This was a qualitative study in nature and research was done by completing a literature review as well as conducting a survey. The survey was voluntary and was offered to participants of grief and loss support groups of a local hospice agency. The literature review discovered spouses/partners begin grieving at the time their spouse/partner is diagnosed with a terminal illness (Black, 1994). Spouses/partners of persons with a terminal illness, who are caregiving, experience a wide variety of stress, loss, role change, guilt and other emotions while caring for their ill spouse/partner (Gilliland & Flemming, 1997 & Duke, 1998). Anticipatory grief may help the surviving spouse/partner accept their ill spouse’s/partner’s diagnosis and prognosis and prepare them better to cope with post-death grief (Houts et. al, 1989). Social workers commonly work with ill patients and their surviving spouses/partners (Mackelprang & Mackelprang, 2005). Social workers are in a position to support these couples by providing a variety of psychosocial interventions (Mohr, 2003). The research study supported supportive psychosocial intervention for the surviving spouse/partner beginning at the time of diagnosis. Caregiving support was also identified as a need for surviving spouses/partners of patients with a terminal illness. Social workers are in a position to support and assist ill patients and their surviving spouses/partners cope with the terminal illness. This qualitative study explored grief responses of surviving spouses/partners at the time their spouse/partner was diagnosed with a terminal illness, throughout treatment, upon death and after death. The study also explored various was in which social workers can support the surviving spouse/partner. Providing support for the surviving spouse at the time of diagnosis was the most significant finding.
Latinos’ Attitudes Toward Depression and Treatment

by Neri Diaz and Elizabeth Burgos

Research Committee: Chair: Catherine Marrs, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Thaddeus Mosqueda, MA, MSW
Theresa McPartlin, LICSW

Abstract
The current literature demonstrates a number of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and stigma that the Latino community has toward depression and treatment. Limited research has been conducted regarding mental health issues, especially depression, in the Latino community. The purpose of this study was to learn how Latinos view depression, what are some of the beliefs about depression, their preferred formal or informal treatment options for depression, and the barriers that Latinos may encounter in receiving treatment for depression. Using a qualitative design the researchers interviewed 18 participants from the Latino community living in a metropolitan city in the Midwest, that have experienced at least one episode of depression in their past without having current suicidal ideation. Participants were male and female Latinos who are 18 years and older. Participants were recruited from two Latino community agencies: 1) a non-profit community clinic serving Latinos and 2) a non-profit multi-service community agency that serves Latinos in the metro area. The researchers utilized the qualitative approach in order to obtain patterns in regards to how Latinos view depression and treatment. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structure interview guide in order to capture meaning and understanding of their experience with depression. The researchers utilized content analysis to analyze the data collected. The findings indicated that Latinos had negative attitudes toward depression and treatment prior to receiving professional help towards depression. The findings also indicated the importance of increasing awareness and education about depression and treatment in order to decrease the stigma and negative attitudes associated with depression within the Latino population.
Protective Factors of Individuals with ADHD against Developing Substance Use Disorders

by John D. Dietzen

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Members: Chris Heise, LICSW
Monica Seidel, LICSW

Abstract
It is of tremendous importance to understand the risk factors as well as the protective factors of individuals with ADHD against developing a Substance Use Disorder (SUD). The purpose of this research was to determine what factors can protect individuals with ADHD against developing a SUD. Using a qualitative design, six individuals from the University of Saint Thomas with a diagnosis of ADHD prior to the age of 18 were interviewed. The questions for these interviews were semi-structured and mostly open-ended and focused specifically on four protective factors: stimulant medication, peer influence, family influence, and religious influence. Transcribed interviews were coded for content analysis as outlined by Berg (2004). The coding scheme for this research study was analytically developed based on past research on protective factors against SUD in the general population as well as past research on the effectiveness of stimulant medication on individuals with ADHD in protecting against SUD. Findings indicate that stimulant medication has numerous benefits but also was found to be commonly abused by the same participants who lauded its’ praises. The findings also indicate high levels of substance abuse and trauma in the participants. These findings illustrate the complexities of prescribing stimulant medication as well as reiterate the importance of competency surrounding ADHD and substance use to mental health workers and medical professionals.
LGB Youth: A Retrospective Study on the Coming-Out Process

By Linnea Dumke

Research Committee: Chair: Philip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: John Manz, LICSW
Valandra, LICSW

Abstract
This qualitative retrospective study focuses on the most influential support for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals during the coming out process and how such influences affect aspects of their self-identity. The questions proposed in this study address the most significant (negative and positive) influences as LGB individuals were developing a self-identity during the coming out process. Eight individuals who identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual between the ages of 22 and 32 volunteered to participate in a 30-45 minute semi-structured, face to face interview. Their stories and reflections on their journey toward self-disclosure provided an in-depth picture of the negative and positive realities of coming-out and how specific influences shaped their self-identity. Several common themes emerged in the interviews, including (1) a perception of being different at an early age (2) family interactions and reactions (3) the importance of friends (4) the negative effects of society/stigma (5) a need for support and resources in schools (5) the presence of positive role models, and (7) the positive effect of disclosure on self-identity. The findings of this study affirm the need to provide more effective support for individuals identifying themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual and more practical resources for friends and families to understand the significant role they play.
Adolescent Pregnancy: A School Social Worker’s Perspective

by Julie Dums

Research Committee: Catherine Marrs, LCSW, Ph.D.
Members: Kiley Krocak, LICSW
David Núñez, M.Ed.

Abstract
Pregnancies involving adolescents increase the risk of school dropout. This event will land them and their child in one of the most vulnerable places in society. The purpose of this study was to have a better understanding of the experiences and perspectives of school social workers assisting pregnant adolescents. In addition, the purpose was to determine what interventions worked well when dealing with adolescent pregnancies and how those interventions assisted in the reduction of subsequent pregnancies. Using a qualitative design, eight school social workers were interviewed regarding their perspectives about the contributions leading to adolescent pregnancy. 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 that although it appears that individual factors, familial factors, and socio-cultural factors play a separate role in contributing to adolescent pregnancy, the school social workers perceived that adolescent pregnancy was more so the result of the three factors intertwined.
Abstract
Despite the intention of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), many English language learners (ELL) are being left behind and are failing to meet graduation requirements set by the state of Minnesota. This research project explores the Minnesota’s standardized graduation tests by doing a case study of one school. Eleven professionals from a school were interviewed, and data from 2 students was attained via a blog website. Findings suggest that the amount of time given students to acquire and be proficient in English was not long enough, that the tests are culturally biased, and that negative impact of labeling of schools based on student test scores has had serious consequences. Two surprising findings include data that students move to other states in order to graduate and that NCLBA impacts schools as a whole. Implications for policy, the general public, and for social work practice are also discussed.
Oncology Social Workers and Complementary Therapy: Where Do We Fit In?

by Marcelyn M. Elwood

Research Committee:  Chair:  Peter D. Freeman, Ed. D.
Members:  Nancy Peloquin, MSSW, LCSW
          Nan Bethmann, RN, BSN, OCN

Abstract
The medical specialty field of oncology is increasing its attention to complementary and alternative (CAM) treatments, and how patients are using these in conjunction with conventional medicine. Some oncology social workers integrate these therapies into their practices, but many practitioners refer patients to resources that are readily available within the community. Research has found that even though patients are often utilizing various forms of complementary therapies, they hesitate to tell their healthcare providers about them. Many times there are no conversations regarding this topic. It has been found that patients are more willing to talk to their oncology social worker about their use of integrative therapies. Research shows that it is important for practitioners to approach this subject with their patients, since many times patients will not openly divulge this pertinent information. Using a quantitative design, a ten-question online survey was sent via e-mail to the 947 members of the Association of Oncology Social Workers (AOSW) who belong to the SWON listserv. A final total of 161 responses were collected and the researcher utilized the SurveyMonkey.com statistical tools to compute the data and obtain the final results. The findings indicated that social workers are indeed the members of the interdisciplinary team who are most likely to discuss integrative therapy use with oncology patients. They also indicated that the majority of the organizations surveyed are supportive of complementary therapy in conjunction with conventional treatment in the oncologic settings in which they are employed.
Dating Violence Perceptions amongst Adolescents

by Bethany A. Erickson

Research Committee:
Chair: Catherine L. Marrs, Ph.D, LCSW
Members: Sarah Tjernagel, MSW, LGSW
Connie Schmoll, LSW

Abstract
This quantitative study focused on adolescent perceptions towards dating violence. The hypothesis examined was whether or not socioeconomic status or gender effects adolescent perceptions towards dating violence. There were 25 participants included in this study, 13 were males and 12 were females. Participants were sampled from two different senior level high school classrooms. A survey was used to collect the data for this study. Four T tests were used to analyze the data. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis in all four statistical tests. The implications for social work practice include continued assistance for adolescents and their families to address the growing social problem of dating violence, continued education for adolescents regarding healthy dating practices, and continued research to examine the perceptions of adolescents towards dating violence.
What is the Experience of Individuals with MS in Addressing Sexuality?

by Amy Jo Flaherty

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D, LISW
Members: Katharine Hill, MPP, MSW, LISW
Sarah Danen, LICSW, MSCS, MSSMC

Abstract
This was an exploratory study of what the experiences are of individuals with MS in addressing sexuality. The study was qualitative and comprised of interviews with four participants who have MS. The interviews consisted of 13 pre-established questions, were audio taped, transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory. The findings were examined through the ecological perspective. The micro, meso and macrosystems examine different aspects, which combined demonstrate a multilayered impact on the participants. The findings suggest that the sexuality of individuals with MS has been impacted and the topic needs to be addressed by a professional. The researcher suggests that medical professionals and social workers include sexuality as part of an assessment of an individual with MS.
Latino Mental Health Practice: A Call For Change or Adaptation?

by Joseph J Frederick

Research Committee: Chair: Phillip AuClaire, Ph.D
Members: Deborah Organ, D. Min., MSW
Roberto Aviña LICSW, LMFT

Abstract
The development of efficacious mental health therapies for the mental health needs of Latinos appears dependent of several variables. The purpose of this study is to discover what if any changes are being made to treatments used with Latinos by therapists in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, and how and why have been being modified. Research indicating that the lack of empirically supported mental health therapies for Latinos highlight that therapists might be modifying treatments beyond what the research was designed to support. Data analyzed from 10 semi-structured interviews with direct service providers showed therapists believe they are effectively modifying treatments. There is also need for further research and development of empirically supported mental health therapies for use with Latinos.
The Impact of Working with Adolescent Sex Offenders on Clinicians

by Crystal Fritzlar

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D, LISW
Members: Naomi Van Batavia, MSW
Valandra, MSW, LISW

Abstract
This study examines the impact that working with adolescent sex offenders has on the clinicians who provide them with therapeutic services. A survey using the Assessment of Dynamic Adaptation (ADA) scale developed by Clarke and Rodger (2007) and questions regarding coping developed by the researcher was responded to by sixteen participants. A data analysis was completed to determine if clinicians who work with adolescent sex offenders are impacted by their work and learn more about how master’s level, LICSW social workers are impacted by this work compared to professionals with other degrees. As a result of a low number of participants all analyses of this data were determined to not be statistically significant. However, when looking at the raw data many of the participants answered in such a way as to support the findings in the literature review. According to Clarke and Roger (2007), the turnover rate for clinicians working with this population is one clinician for every four sexual offenders; during this study one clinician left their position working with adolescent sex offenders. This is a unique population with unique needs which require skilled professionals to work with them. These findings indicate that there is a need for skilled clinical social workers for this population and also appears to indicate a need for clinical social work researchers to find out more about what will keep skilled social work clinicians in these positions as this is what this population of people need.
The Relationship between Mental Health Diagnosis and Drug(s) of Choice

by Alexine Anderson Gaetz

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Thomas Austad, LADC
Lori Lahr-Moulds, LICSW

Abstract
The impact that chemical dependency has upon one’s mental health, physical health and social functioning reflects the multi-dimensional treatment approach needed to create effective and holistic recovery and maintained sobriety. The purpose of this research project was to explore the relationship between each participant’s mental health diagnosis and his drug(s) of choice. Using a quantitative design, 27 male participants that had recently completed formal chemical dependency treatment were given a 15 question survey to learn more about their views regarding their own experiences with mental health diagnosis and chemical dependency. Data was analyzed by developing trends within the literature (treatment outcomes, mental health and physical health). The trends were later visible within the research tools. The findings show that all of the respondents believe that their mental health impacts their physical health. Many believed that their mental health was related to their drug(s) of choice and that their drug(s) of choice made their mental health symptoms worse. These findings confirm the need for mental health and chemical dependency professionals to integrate holistic treatment methods in treatment and placement planning. The findings also confirm that clients receiving these services have a general understanding of how the illnesses impact one another.
A Clinical Therapist’s Perspective: How to Mend Ruptures in the Therapeutic Relationship

by Paige A. Giblin

Research Committee:

Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Maria Quinn, B.A.
          Shadee Hardy, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This research project examined clinical interventions and strategies to help mend ruptures in the therapeutic relationship when working with individuals diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Thirteen subjects participated in this study by completing a survey designed by the researcher. The methodology used in this project was both quantitative and qualitative. Along with the survey, participants received a case example illustrating a ruptured therapeutic relationship with a client diagnosed with BPD. The findings suggest that using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a favored therapeutic orientation to implement for reparation. Regardless of specific interventions, demonstrating empathy emerged as one of the most helpful skills to use when repairing a therapeutic rupture. Moreover, the findings indicate using some form of professional support offers clinical therapists an opportunity to process their experiences when working with a challenging population. Receiving professional support can ultimately promote advantageous outcomes for clients if therapists are engaging in their own personal care. The results of this study demonstrate that further research conducted on reparation in the therapeutic relationship when working clients diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder would offer more conclusive and extensive information. Conducting a qualitative study that researched effective interventions from a client’s perspective would also be an interesting area of research to explore.
The Role of Supervision for Assessment of and Education Regarding Secondary Traumatic Stress Reactions

by Heather M. Gillen

Research Committee: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Chair: Members: Beverly Green, MSSW
Beverly Green, MSSW
Meredith Stevens, MA

Abstract
The purpose of this research project was to explore how supervisors are assessing and educating those they supervise about secondary traumatic stress reactions. Using a qualitative design, seven individuals who provide clinical supervision to psychotherapists were interviewed regarding the assessment and education of secondary traumatic stress reactions. The interview inquired about the training supervisors have had, if supervisors are hearing about trauma, the most challenging aspects of working with individuals who have a history of trauma, the signs of secondary traumatic stress reactions, how secondary traumatic stress reactions are addressed in supervision, and the impact length of time in the social service field has on supervisees. Data were analyzed using a grounded theory method. The findings support previous research, which identifies that secondary traumatic stress reactions affects job performance, physical health, and mental health. Furthermore, the findings support the importance of self-care strategies, consultation groups, and training/education in preventing and recovering from secondary traumatic stress reactions. These findings underscore the important role supervision plays in assessing for and educating supervisees about secondary traumatic stress reactions. Furthermore, it demonstrates the continual need for developing awareness about the potential impact that working in a social service field has on those who are in and those who are entering the profession.
The Beliefs and Assumptions Among Potential Adoptive Parents About Adopting Older Children

by Julie K. Glynn

Research Committee: Chair: Peter Freeman, Ed.D., MSSW, LICSW
Members: Beverly Metcalfe, MSW
Leahan Drone, BSW, CSW

Abstract
The purpose of this project was to explore the beliefs and assumptions of potential adoptive parents considering adoption of older children from foster care. Older children are adopted out of the child welfare system at a statistically slower rate than younger children across the country. The researcher looked at several bio-psycho-social-educational child attributes and potential adoptive parents’ beliefs and assumptions about older children’s ability to improve their functioning with appropriate services. The study also looked at what age preferences potential adoptive parents prefer and if they are willing to consider adoption of an older child.
Evaluating the Effectiveness of Afrocentric Programming in Schools: The Professionals’ Perspective

by LaRone Raymos Greer

Research Committee: Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Members: Keith Allen, MSW
          Darin McGowan

Abstract
Most African American professionals are aware of the high rates of young black males interfacing systems. For example, young black males disproportionately represented among Americans experience out-of-home placement in the welfare system. Juveniles are sentenced and confined to juvenile detention centers, and the high number of black males in special education programs in high school. This clinical research project provides information about the supports for black males in Afrocentric programming. Using a qualitative design, a non-probability of six African American professionals with Project Warrior was interviewed regarding their professional perspective of Afrocentric programming. Data was analyzed using content analysis in which themes were identified and then linked to previously related literature. The themes identified were: collaboration with systems, school and community support, successful outcomes, relationships, and applications of Afrocentric framework.

The findings indicated here six out of six professionals identified collaboration with systems and programs are important to effective case management of young black males. Moreover, five of six Project Warrior professionals felt that the relationship with the male and family are important for successful outcomes.

Overwhelmingly, six out of six African American professionals reported the utilization of Nguzo Nane directly with the young black male. The professionals described their school support as being critical to significant outcomes of young black males. Overall, Afrocentric programming support and improved more positive outcomes for young black males.
Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment for Adolescent Depression in a School Setting: An Analysis

by Latoya Gruys

Research Committee:
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Shelley Theisen, LICSW
Kathy Lewis, RN

Abstract
This study sought to explore the overall effectiveness of the Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention in a School Setting model, as well as to investigate its effectiveness in improving students’ social functioning by specifically focusing on students’ school attendance, feelings of optimism, and feelings of self worth/self-esteem. Secondary data analysis was used. This model was implemented in two secondary schools in a southern suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota with groups led by school social workers once per week for nine weeks. This study collected data on 24 participants ranging in age from 13 to 18. Descriptive and inferential analyses were performed using participants’ Beck Depression Inventory-II scores, Weekly Mood Questionnaire scores, and attendance. Qualitative data for participants’ feelings of optimism and self worth/self-esteem were analyzed and coded for themes. The findings suggest that this model is effective, with participants having decreased depressive symptomology after participating in the group sessions (ES = .76). Areas to consider for future research regarding interventions for adolescent depression in a school setting are provided.
A Men’s Support Group: An Adjunct for Men in Psychotherapy

by Ernest M. Gunderson

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members: Mark Lachapelle, M.S.W
Mark Raderstorf, M.A.

Abstract
Men more than women are prone to social isolation, which can contribute to or intensify emotional disturbances such as anxiety or depression. Men’s support groups have proven to be a valuable yet inexpensive pathway to social support and connection for men. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effect of participation in a men’s support group on men in psychotherapy. Interviews were conducted with eleven men who at some time during the past ten years had participated regularly and concurrently in psychotherapy and a men’s support group. From a large collection of data, categories and themes were identified, many of which corresponded to the themes found in the existing literature on men’s support groups and men in psychotherapy. The participants revealed strong appreciation toward their men’s support groups for providing emotional support and peer feedback on a variety of personal issues. Furthermore, they said their men’s groups supported and reinforced their work in psychotherapy and that the psychotherapy had supported and encouraged their participation in the support groups. The findings reveal a positive reinforcement between psychotherapy and a men’s support group, which can be used advantageously by therapists and social work clinicians to assist male clients.
Committed Partners of Law Enforcement Officers Report Stressors and Coping Techniques

by Bethany J. Hanson

Research Committee: Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, Ph.D.
Members: Angeline Barretta-Herman, Ph.D.
           Donna Geisen, M.S.W.
           Steve Wickelgren, M.A.

Abstract
This study sought to understand the patterns of stressors noted and coping techniques used by the spouses or committed partners of law enforcement officers. The researcher utilized an online survey site to gather information from respondents invited from three different groups: a nationwide online support group (Wives Behind the Badge), the Law Enforcement Family Support Network, and the Los Angeles Police Department spouse support group. After a ten-week window for data collection, 376 valid responses were gathered and analyzed. Findings indicated that while none of the stressor options listed presented as a “great source of stress” for the majority of respondents, on an individual level there were cases of what appeared to be extreme stress pertaining to the profession of the respondents’ committed partner. As a group, the respondents tended to use problem-focused coping strategies and focusing on the positive as the primary means of coping with the stress related to the officers’ profession. There are implications in social work for future research based on these findings. While the group trends did not indicate statistically high levels of stress related to the job of the officer, individual responses did. These findings reinforce the importance of careful clinical assessment and more in-depth information about the context of these quantitative findings. For example, a qualitative approach might be used in the future to gather a context to responses that this study did not.
Profound Wholeness: A Client’s Experience in Hakomi Mindfulness-Based Somatic Psychotherapy

by Jess Helle-Morrissey, M.A.

Research Committee: 
Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D.
Members: Janet Dahlem, MA
Stacy Husebo, MSW

Abstract
Hakomi psychotherapy is a mindfulness-based, body-centered modality of psychotherapy developed in the United States in the 1970’s. Due to recent scholarly interest in both mindfulness and body-centered work in relation to mental health, Hakomi merits further study. Having noted a lack of research into this modality, the current study used a single-subject case study design to investigate the lived experience of a client in Hakomi psychotherapy. The researcher and participant met over a 2-month period of time during which the participant was a client in Hakomi. The researcher also met with the participant’s Hakomi therapist. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data, and data were analyzed and coded for themes. Results showed that the participant found Hakomi to be a profound and meaningful experience. Themes of the participant’s experience in Hakomi included the difference between Hakomi and traditional psychotherapy, the importance of using mindfulness, the presence of the therapist, the power of working through the body, and other related sub-themes. Implications of this study highlight the need for further Hakomi research, as well as further training for both graduate students and practicing psychotherapists in Hakomi and other holistic psychotherapy modalities.
Relationships of Caucasian Social Workers with African American Children in Foster Care

by Lacey M. Henry, LSW

Research Committee:  
Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D  
Members:  
Katie Kaminski Schmidt, LICSW  
Gena Hunstad, LGSW

Abstract
Caucasian social workers make up the majority of all social workers while African American children have the highest rates of representation within the foster care system. Building and implementing positive rapport with African American children and their families within the foster care system has become extremely important. The purpose of this clinical research project was to explore how social workers working directly with African American children build rapport and gain cultural awareness. Furthermore, the research sought to gain knowledge regarding what techniques and strategies have been most beneficial to Caucasian social workers as well as how understanding bias, stereotypes, or preconceived notions can assist or deter progress with African American children and their families. A qualitative design was used to gather data from seven Caucasian social workers in a specific child welfare agency. A semi-standardized interview was completed to gather data. Data was analyzed and connected to previously researched literature. The findings indicate there was not a specific method that proved to be completely effective when building rapport with African American children and their families. Though each social worker had their own method to building rapport with African American children and their families one consistent indication was that the social workers personality was a clear link to the positive rapport that is build with the family. Being aware of cultural differences, biases, stereotypes, and preconceived notions allows social workers to be more culturally competent. Social workers that work in a supportive environment better understand and express their biases and work more efficiently with African American children and their families. These findings do not support previous research that Caucasian’s bias views deter African American children from getting services that are needed.
Becoming a Parent: Impacts of Clinicians’ Parental Status on Practice

by Morgan C. Hittner

Research Committee:
Chair: Ken Root, Ph.D.
Alison Mezzenga, LP
Denise Morcomb, LICSW

Abstract
The shift from being an individual, to being an individual with a child means taking on new roles and responsibilities. These new roles and responsibilities will impact many areas of an individual’s life, including their work life. The purpose of this study was to explore the parental status of clinicians and its impact on practice. The primary research question in this study asks, “What are the impacts of a clinician’s parental status on practice?” A content analysis was conducted using seven interviews with clinicians who currently worked with children and/or families in clinical settings. Findings in this study highlight many positive impacts of the clinicians’ parental status on their practice. Further, the findings underscore the reciprocal relationships between a clinician’s professional and personal identities. Results of this study provide social workers with insights that could enhance their practice with clients, regardless of their own parental status.
Influence of Neurobiology in Clinical Social Work

by Andrew K. Hoerauf

Research Committee:

Chair:
Colin Hollidge LICSW Ph.D

Members:
Michelle Gricus MSW LICSW
Matthew Kapsner Pharm D.

Abstract
This research project undertakes an action research approach of reviewing clinical social workers’ views on the influence of neurobiology in their clinical practice, and if they find the knowledge of neurobiology influential. Using a quantitative design, twelve surveys out of fifty from licensed clinical social workers were analyzed to evaluate the degree of agreeability on how knowledge of neurobiology can influence their clinical social work practice and affect treatment with mental health clients. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistic analysis. The findings indicated that most of the respondents felt that knowledge of neurobiology influences clinical social work practice, affects communication with primary care physicians and psychiatrists, and that all social workers should be educated in neurobiology. These findings represent the importance for ongoing education in neurobiology for licensed clinical social workers, as well as the need for initial education in the university school system.
Art in Therapy: Adult Women and Depression

by Suzannah M. Hoyt

Research Committee
Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Members: Sandy Parnell, MSW
Connie Walsh, CHW

Abstract
The purpose of this quantitative study was to inquire whether social work practitioners implement art in therapy as a means to effectively lower the level of depression for adult women. In addition, this study questioned how social workers utilize art in therapy as a therapeutic intervention with adult women with depression, including what modality is used and how often it is used. Finally, the research addressed whether social work practitioners see art in therapy as a stand-alone modality, or one to be used only in conjunction with other interventions. One hundred twenty social worker professionals from the LSW, LGSW, LISW, and LICSW licensures were randomly sampled and given the opportunity to participate in this study from a list of 400 provided by the Minnesota State Board of Social Work. A series of descriptive statistics were run with the Minitab computer program. This study found that while the literature supported that art in therapy interventions can be beneficial in lowering depression for women, only a little more than a quarter of social workers stated that they used art in therapy interventions and offered that they use this intervention less than monthly. Findings suggested that while a good percent of participants speak highly of the intervention, they do not integrate the method into their practice. Findings also suggest that further research is needed as well as education and information directed towards social workers regarding the effects and use of art in therapy interventions with clients and the diverse ways that it can be incorporated into social work practice.
A Clinicians’ perspective of effective therapeutic approaches with the Developmentally Disabled population

by Marie Hudalla

Research Committee:

Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W, PhD.
Members: Cynthia Gieseke, LGSW
Jodi Sell, LGSW

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore what the effective therapeutic approaches that are used with clients that have developmental disabilities. Mental retardation is a disorder in which a person’s overall intellectual functioning is well below average, with an intelligence quotient (IQ) around 70 or less. People with intellectual disabilities have an elevated biological vulnerability to many diseases, and many also run an increased risk of mental health issues. The primary research question in this study asks “What therapeutic approaches are effective when working with an individual with developmental disabilities?” The researcher used seven different therapeutic models used to treat people who have mental health issues and looked at how clinicians modify them when working with an individual with developmental disabilities. The therapies reviewed were Psychotherapy, Narrative Therapy, Interactive-Behavioral Therapy (IBT), Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Play Therapy, and Creative Therapy. The findings in this study suggest that there is a further need to evaluate what therapeutic approaches are effective. It is critical for social workers and clinicians to continue to educate and conduct research to further help this population lead fulfilling lives.
War on the Home Front: Marital Satisfaction After Deployment

by Jessica Huneke

Research Committee:

Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D
Members: Deb Wagner, LICSW
Desiree Carvel, LPC

Abstract

Our country’s most recent war, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom has affected the lives of thousands of military men and women in our country. Unlike other wars, these men and women can anticipate to be subjected to repeated and lengthy deployments. The purpose of this study was to determine if deployments affected a veteran’s marital satisfaction. This study used a quantitative research design which contained demographic questions, the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale and questions related to communication during deployment. Twenty nine veterans from a Midwestern VA Medical Center completed the survey. After analyzing the data using MiniTab, it was found that veteran’s marital satisfaction did not change significantly after deployment. However, the respondents’ marital satisfaction appeared to be low to moderate before and after their deployment. Variables such as length of deployment and number of deployments had a low correlation with marital satisfaction. Continuing research is needed to examine other variables that may affect a veteran’s marital satisfaction and the best services available to meet the needs of our country’s veterans and their families.
Clinicians’ Perceptions of Licensed Independent Clinical Social Work (LICSW) and Master’s Level Licensed Psychology (MA-LP)

by Peggy Huot

Research Committee: Chair: Peter Freeman, Ed.D
Members: Lisa Dau, MA, LP
Diane Johnson, MSW, LISW

Abstract

A comparison between Licensed Independent Clinical Social Work (LICSW) compared to Master’s-Level Licensed Psychology (MA-LP) is a new topic of study though both professions have been in existence for decades. This research project focused on the definition of and perspectives of LICSW and MA-LP: why and how clinicians identify with either as a career choice. Using a qualitative design, 6 interviews were performed. Three were LICSWs licensed by the Minnesota Board of Social Work and three were MA-LPs licensed by the Minnesota Board of Psychology. The interview included a set of ten questions. Two main questions were addressed by this study: What are the similarities and difference between an LICSW and an MA-LP? What are the clinicians’ perceptions of why they chose their career path? The findings indicated there were not significant differences between an LICSW and an MA-LP. This study highlights clinicians’ perspectives of each profession and demonstrates the importance of each profession. This study also reveals the importance of educating prospective therapists about the dimensions of each license.
A Clinical Therapist’s Perspective on Treating Adolescents with Dual Disorders

by Jill M. Husnick

Research Committee:
Chair: Carole F. Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: David Gibson, MSW, LICSW
George Baboila, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
A high percentage of adolescents in treatment facilities have dual disorders but are only being treated for a mental health disorder or substance use disorder. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of adolescents with dual disorders from the perspective of clinical therapists who work with adolescents in treatment for dual disorders. One clinical therapist responded and participated in the research study. Data analysis included both an inductive and deductive approach in which categories related to the conceptual framework were developed from the interview and then linked to previous literature. The findings indicated that systems integration is the focus of many areas of a treatment facility. Funding, licensure, professional training, referrals, assessments, programs and organization, and collaboration of outside professionals and families were found to be important in treating the adolescent with a dual disorder. In treating the adolescent, the two main treatment models identified were CBT and DBT. Implications for practice include the importance of integrative training for clinicians who work with adolescents with dual disorders; limitations to access treatment caused by funding patterns; and the need for more research on the treatment of adolescents with dual disorders.
Vicarious Trauma Experienced by Therapists Treating Sexual Offenders

by Mandy E. Hyland

Research Committee
Chair: Peter Freeman, Ed.D, MSSW, LICSW
Members: Charles Dawley, MA, LP, LICSW
Judy Dawley, MSW, LICSW,RPT-S

Abstract
This study examines the impacts of vicarious trauma on therapists treating sexual offenders, and the coping strategies used to lessen or avoid these impacts, and takes a look at differences in how males and females are impacted and whether they use different coping strategies. This study defines vicarious trauma and how it is different from burnout and countertransference. The study hypothesizes that there are differences in the impacts of vicarious trauma on male and female therapists treating sexual offenders and that they use different coping strategies.

This study used quantitative analysis of data from e-mailed surveys completed by therapists working in a setting where they are treating sexual offenders. The survey consisted of questions with a fixed set of alternatives from which the respondents chose. Findings showed some differences and similarities in both impacts and coping strategies for male and female therapists. The need for richer information is needed and future research should focus on using a quantitative approach to be able to better define questions and answers and the meaning behind them.
Parents’ experiences of raising a child with a developmental disability

by Brita M. Jacobson

Research Committee:
Chair: Tamara Kaiser, PhD
Members: Stephanie Barrett-Combey, LICSW
Judy Strommen, MA, LP

Abstract
This qualitative study explored the experiences of parents who have a child with a developmental disability. Interviews were completed with five parents to learn their accounts of the experience of receiving their child’s initial diagnosis, ways it affected their families, seeking treatment interventions, and the ways they learned to cope with and adjust to their child’s needs. The objective of the study was to gain insight into these parents’ experiences in order to learn ways for professionals to be more effective in supporting these families. The contents of the interviews were analyzed to identify themes and categories expressed by the participants. The findings indicated that these parents face an intense conflict of emotions, moving between joy and pride in who their child is, and grief as they have struggled to adjust to what their child’s diagnosis will mean for their lives. Among this struggle there is an overwhelming sense of ambiguity and uncertainty about what the future will hold, which is especially evident in the first few years after their child received their diagnosis. The small number of participants in this study creates a limitation in regard to generalizing the results over the larger population. However, there are implications that can be taken from this study, including the need for increased education for professionals working with parents of children with a developmental disability and for additional resources for parent support groups or mentor programs.
Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Clinical Practice

by Lisa R. Jensen

Research Committee: Chair: Peter D. Freeman, EdD, MSSW, LICSW
Members: Kathy Erb-Caron, MSW, LICSW
Gary M. Simpson, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Many studies have found promising results of mindfulness-based interventions in clinical practice. However, researchers have yet to determine specifically how individuals benefit from mindfulness and why mindfulness-based interventions yield positive results. The purpose of this project was to explore in what ways mindfulness-based interventions are effective in clinical practice; with which disorders clinicians use mindfulness-based interventions; and how mental health diagnosis impacts the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions. Using a qualitative design, seven licensed therapists were interviewed to provide their professional opinions about the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions. Content analysis was used to examine and interpret data. Data was presented by highlighting the participants’ answers to each question. The findings indicated that mindfulness-based interventions are effective in numerous ways. Clinicians use mindfulness-based interventions with a variety of disorders, but most often with depressive and anxiety disorders. It does not appear that mental health diagnosis impacts the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions; however, specific diagnosis appears to inform how to proceed with use of mindfulness-based interventions. These findings support the use of mindfulness-based interventions in clinical practice with a wide variety of individuals with no regard for specific diagnosis. Further research is warranted to determine more specifically how mental health diagnosis might help to inform therapists about how to go about using mindfulness-based interventions effectively with any given population of individuals.
Homeless Students from Early Childhood to 12th Grade: Challenges for School Social Workers in Urban Education

by Melissa A. Jobe

Research Committee:
Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW, LICSW, M.Phil, Ed.D
Members: Jim Schaldach, LGSW
          Becky Hicks, MED, LSW

Abstract
The average age of a homeless person in the state of Minnesota is 7 years old. When students do not have a home, they frequently have poor school attendance, do not have clean clothes, can not bathe regularly, come to school hungry and tired with little energy to focus on reading, writing and math. Homeless students worry about where they are going to sleep at night, if it will be safe, and how they can keep other kids from finding out that they do not have a home. When homeless students have so many unknowns, feelings of anxiety, worry, shame, or anger, can make it difficult for teachers to help a student to focus on academics. The purpose of this project is to explore how public school social workers meet the needs of their homeless students and how they can better advocate for them. Federal mandates, such as McKinney-Vento, have been implemented to address some of the barriers that homeless children encounter in obtaining their education. With the increasing number of unemployment, the mortgage crisis, and sky rocketing foreclosure rates, the economic conditions have made homelessness a reality for many more families. These stressful economic times have also caused many community resources with limited funding, to be drained much more quickly. It has additionally impacted how school social workers are able to work with families and school staff. This difficult economic time, has not bypassed schools. Many school social workers are solely funded by special education, therefore causing great challenges to address the needs of non-special education students and their families. Using qualitative design, 10 school social workers participated in an in-depth interview about their experiences working with homeless students, their families, school staff, and community organizations.
Perceptions of Creative Engagement on Quality of Life of Older Adults In Long-Term Care

by Jan Johnston

Research Committee: Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW.
LICSW, M. Phil, Ed.D
Members: Shelly Rottenberg, MSW, LISW
Joyce Konczyk, LSW

Abstract
The overarching question asked in this study was whether creative engagement in a dance, movement, music and storytelling program was perceived to affect the quality of life of participants living at a long-term care (LTC) facility. This program, called The Dancing Heart: Vital Elders Moving in Community, was begun at one of the Ebenezer campuses in the fall of 2008. Many of the respondents interviewed for this study, four dance facilitators, four LTC employees, and two volunteers, had over one year to observe, interact with and learn from the participants in their involvement in the once weekly program. The findings of this study revealed nine themes that were tied to the literature and viewed through the lens of several theoretical perspectives. These findings indicated that the use of creative activities with older adults anywhere on the cognitive spectrum promotes a strong body/mind connection, stimulates new learning, provides social interaction and engagement, and a sense of purpose and mastery. Implications for clinical social work practice and education will be discussed.
Infertility: The Loss of a Dream

by Cynthia I. Johnson

Research Committee:
Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Diane Bauer, MSW, LICSW
Lynn Ericson Starr, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Approximately 6.2 million women diagnosed with infertility face numerous emotional stressors (Fassino, et. al., 2002, Harwood, 2007, Cudmore, 2005). The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the long term effect that infertility has on women’s views of the future. Using a qualitative design, eight participants were interviewed from one support organization facilitated by RESOLVE, the nation’s largest infertility support group. Participants were asked about their individual experiences with infertility using a semi-structured interview. Data were analyzed using content analysis to identify themes and patterns. The findings indicate the areas most impacted are: relationships, coping strategies, and the participant’s views on the future. In addition, concerns with the medical field and implications for social work practice emerged. These findings support previous literature and the need for education and early intervention for women facing infertility.
Support Systems and Resilience is Adolescent Girls with a Cleft Lip and Palate

by Ericka Johnson

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph. D.
Members: Kris Knetsch, LISW
Anna Thurmes, MA., SLP

Abstract
This study examined support systems for adolescent females with a cleft lip and palate. Participants completed an open ended-survey that addressed the various areas of support that was identified from the literature. This study found that there was a lack of peer support as well as an overall feeling of a lack of ability to relate to others. Online support groups were reported to be effective support in promoting resiliency for this population because the respondents were able to connect with others with a similar medical condition. The implication from this study is the importance of psychosocial assessment and finding appropriate supports for females with a cleft lip and palate. Also, online support groups seem to fill a need that these girls experience of finding people like them, who have experienced what they have experienced.
Abstract
In this study exploring connections between levels of burnout and perceptions about what causes burnout, a survey was administered to 500 licensed independent clinical social workers (LICSWs) in the state of Minnesota. The survey contained demographic questions, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and questions exploring respondents’ perceptions about the cause of burnout and their estimation of the influence various factors would have on turnover due to burnout. Several correlations were found between burnout dimension scores and responses to perception and turnover questions. Burnout scores were also correlated with agreement with “myth” statements about burnout.
Children’s Parental Deaths: School Social Worker Role

by Rebecca L. Johnson

Research Committee; Chair: Kendra Garrett, PhD., LICSW
Members: Donna Brengman, MSW, LICSW
Wendy Kardia, M.A.

Abstract
This study explores how school social workers can assist a child with his/her loss of a parent. Seven school social workers and one high school guidance counselor within the seven metro counties participated in semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate five themes: the school social workers’ role, the theories and interventions that are used and tend to be most beneficial, that referral process works, the challenges school social workers perceive, and the role cultural diversity plays in the grief process. The school social workers described their roles on a spectrum of immersing themselves into the child’s grief and on the other end a more passive role. School social workers’ interventions found to be beneficial were expressive and projective play techniques. There are several challenges involved in working with grieving children: self-care, limited resources and time, consent to talk with the student, and complicated parental death. Cultural diversity factors need to be defined before interventions can be determined. This study suggests that school social workers can play an important role in students’ resilience for grief.
Gender Equality and the Family: The Role of the Clinical Social Worker

by Sarah Johnston

Abstract

The impact from the women’s movement created a massive shift in gender roles over the last fifty years. Even though women have made advances in the workforce, they continue to be responsible for household and child care duties, resulting in issues of gender equality in the family. According to the National Association of Social Workers, social workers are the largest provider of mental health services and research shows that clinical social workers struggle to promote and address issues of gender equality when practicing family therapy. In this qualitative study, eight clinical social workers were interviewed. The participants were asked to reflect on gender equality in family therapy focusing on culture, self-awareness, and social justice, as well as the strengths and challenges facing families. This study confirms that clinical social workers understand and have knowledge of gender equality in the family. However, clinical social workers struggle to directly address gender equality issues in the family. Findings also indicate that the participants saw the economy and unemployment as impacting gender roles in families, especially as men find themselves unable to provide financial support for the family. Participants incorporated social justice into their clinical work, but did not report using supervision to explore personal values around gender equality. This study has many implications as a foundation for future research, social work educations, and social work practice.
Clinicians Attitudes Toward Self-Injury in Individuals Diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder

by Amy Jones

Research Committee: Chair:  Catherine Marrs, MSW, LISW, PhD
Members: Justine Richels, LGSW  
Michelle Gricus, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore clinicians’ attitudes toward non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) in individuals diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Using a qualitative design, nine clinicians who had experience working with BPD and NSSI were interviewed. A semi-structured interview with fifteen questions was used to examine if level of education and training were factors in the clinicians’ attitudes towards clients. The data was analyzed by color-coding five themes that were present in the findings. The themes included: 1) work experience, 2) training, 3) knowledge of NSSI, 4) attitudes toward BPD and NSSI, and 5) beliefs about BPD and NSSI. It was found that all participants have a general understanding of common acts of NSSI. Personal attitudes and beliefs as well as attitudes experienced by other professionals were slightly varied. The general attitude was mostly negative. The findings indicated that the more training clinicians received on BPD and NSSI, the more likely clinicians would have an increased sense of empathy and positive attitudes when working with this population. Additionally, clinicians who have more training are less likely to perceive individuals who have a diagnosis of BPD and engage in NSSI behavior as manipulative, attention seeking, and untreatable. These findings highlight the importance of training and education of BPD and NSSI to improve quality of care, and to eliminate the stigma of this population.
African American Experiences with and Perceptions of Racial Microaggressions

by Jordan Jones

Research Committee: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D 
Rodney Dewberry, LICSW 
Preston McMillan

Abstract
This research describes African Americans’ experiences and perceptions of “racial microaggressions” and explores whether these experiences meet criteria for “race-based traumatic stress injury.” Little research to date has studied the perceived experiences and implications of subtle, racially-based incidents that build over a lifetime, and to date, no study has specifically linked racial microaggressions with race-based traumatic stress injury. Individual interviews with eight African American adults found that experiences of racial incidents can be stressful and evoke a wide range of responses, including: exhaustion, anger, reduced self-esteem, and motivation to help in their communities. Many participants endorsed expressions of criteria for race based traumatic stress injury and explained how they are able to cope with their experiences by making conscious decisions. People who were not being intentionally hurtful or racist perpetrated nearly all of the racial microaggressions described by participants. Practitioners should examine their personal biases, be conscious of the language that they use, and validate the perceptions of discrimination of their clients.
How Social Workers Best Engage Families to Assist Their Loved-one in the Nursing Home

by Kalekye Kambuni

Research Committee:

Chair: Michael Chovanec, PhD.
Members: Peterson Ngunyi, MSW
Ali Hassan, BSW

Abstract

This research sought to find out about how social workers best engage families to assist their loved ones in adapting to the nursing home environment. Research questions were created for the purpose of this study after reviewing articles related to nursing home residents and family involvement. Eight nursing home social workers were conveniently selected and interviewed using a tape recorder. Six out of eight social workers talked about family dynamic playing a huge part in residents’ psychosocial well-being on many different levels. Seven out of eight social workers mentioned daily living of a nursing home resident being a very important factor and how members interact with resident as being important. Seven out of eight social workers also mentioned about HIPPA as factor that hinder family involvement and they said that they ranged from eating schedule, shared rooms, space availability for families to be able to visit with resident and privacy practice (HIPPA) rules the nursing home has to abide by. Five out of eight social workers talked about family councils where families are encouraged to attend and discuss problems in the nursing home and how nursing homes can improve to take care of the resident. Study implications for Social Work and recommendations for future research are also discussed.
Provider and Staff Perceptions of a School-Based Mental Health Project: A Qualitative Evaluation

by Katherine Henry Kauls

Research Committee: Chair: Kendra J. Garrett, PhD, LICSW
Members: Paul Sterlacci, LP, MSE
Mireille Bardy, MA, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
This study is a qualitative program evaluation of the elementary mental health project, a school-based mental health intervention that was launched to serve students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders, through interviews with the providers and staff who participated in the program. The data for this study was collected in individual face-to-face interviews with the school administrator, program facilitator, school psychologist, licensed mental health professional, licensed school counselor, and school social workers. Five major themes emerged from the study: Benefits of the elementary mental health project’s accessibility in general, as well as in crisis situations; positive effects of the collaborative nature of the elementary mental health project, and the effective communication that resulted from the collaboration; positive outcomes for students participating in the elementary mental health project, including the project’s impact in terms of medication stabilization, relationships with staff and peers, emotion regulation, and academic learning; limitations of the elementary mental health project, which included the challenges of age constraints, transportation barriers, and needed support for caregivers and families; and concern about the future of the elementary mental health project, due to funding uncertainties. Implications include further research involving qualitative data from students and their parents/caregivers who participated in the project. Findings also suggest that further research may demonstrate the collaborative model as beneficial for students in other school settings.
Male Perspective of Men’s Domestic Violence Treatment: A Qualitative Study

by Lorraine M. Kendall

Research Committee:

Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Members: Mark Olson, LICSW
Jackie Foley, BS

Abstract
The ongoing impact of intimate partner violence continues to cost individuals and our society greatly. Given that the reported perpetrators of this problem primarily tend to be men, a focus on the intervention and treatment of men was the motive behind this project. Using a qualitative design, this project evaluated the effectiveness of domestic violence treatment from the perspective of the successful graduates of Project RESTORE. The data was analyzed by coding and re-coding using the grounded theory method. The finding indicated that participants found the program helpful in creating change in their lives, specifically in managing their anger. The way the participants identified these changes were made was based on the support and challenging of other group members, the expectations and process of the programming, and in the support and challenging by the group facilitators. These findings underscore the positive impact that domestic violence treatment in a group setting can have for men in improving their relationships.
The adoption experience: Adoptive mothers’ perspectives during post-adoption adjustment

by Calley L. Kingston

Research Committee: Chair: Carol Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Peggy Thomsen, MSW, LICSW
Connie Roller, MSW, LISW

Abstract
Using the responses from 20 adoptive mothers, this study examined the perspective of adoptive mothers’ experiences throughout the adoption experience. The adoptive mothers who completed the survey had adopted their child(ren) through a local adoption agency that facilitated adoptions from Russia. The participants concluded their latest adoption at least one year prior to this study. Seven elements found in previous literature about the adoption experience were explored: feelings of anxiety, communication about adoptive life, experience with infertility, perceived level of support, presence of social stigmas, having realistic expectations, and feelings of anger and hostility.

Findings indicated that feelings of anxiety were a common occurrence throughout the adoption process. Half of the respondents indicated that infertility was a factor in the decision to adopt; these respondents were more likely to have realistic expectations about post-adoption life than their counterparts who did not experience infertility. Participants reported that the adoptees’ behaviors were more difficult to manage than they had anticipated. Respondents also identified a high level of support from friends and family, open communication about adoptive life, and a relatively low level of social stigma. Implications for future practice and research are discussed.
Voices of TBI: Exploring Employer Attitudes and Employment Outcomes

by Angela R. Kjonaas

Research Committee:
Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D.
Members: Libby Gagnon
Jane Hurley-Johncox, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Little information exists about employers' perceptions on employing people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI); therefore, this study explored the role of employers’ attitudes from the perspective of those directly impacted: individuals with TBI. A qualitative study was designed to answer the research questions, What perceptions do persons with TBI have of employers’ attitudes towards them? and How do these perceptions impact their employment outcomes? Four main themes emerged from the analysis of seven interview transcripts: unseen abilities, employer flexibility, motivations for work, and employer attitudes. Results suggest a need to focus on individuals and their strengths, rather than their disabilities, and to utilize individualized accommodations. Employers need to recognize work is an achievable goal for most individuals after a TBI.
Rural Parents’ Perceptions of Strengths and Barriers to Accessing Children’s Mental Health Services

by Elise R. Knapp

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D.
Members: Andrea Smothers, MSW, LICSW
Kristen Johnson, BSW

Abstract
This clinical research project explores parents’ perceptions of the supports and barriers to accessing and using services for children with mental illness in rural Minnesota. According to an estimate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008), one in every five children and adolescents nationally has a mental health disorder, and one in ten has a serious emotional disturbance that affects his/her daily functioning. Two thirds of these young people with mental health disorders who need help are reportedly not getting it. In Minnesota, there are an estimated 40,000 children and adolescents younger than age 20 have a mental health diagnosis. Untreated mental health problems are likely to lower these children’s quality of life and reduce their life chances or opportunities. These problems often impact the family structure that can further impact society as a whole. Using a qualitative design, seven parents who utilized services at a small, rural family therapy center were interviewed regarding their perceptions about the supports and barriers for accessing and using mental health service for their children. Data were analyzed using content analysis. Themes are identified and then connected to previously related literature identified in this study. The findings indicated that the key to quality mental health services for their child was about the relationship established by the mental health provider. Understanding rural culture, values and personal traits is critical to establishing supportive care. Barriers to accessing children’s mental health services in rural areas are the parent’s own mental health issues and lack of service options available in rural communities. The findings from this study may provide support for improving quality, access and use of mental health services for children living in rural areas in the future.
Supervision, Support, and Social Worker Burnout

by Kristin N. Knisley

Research Committee: Chair: Dr. Carol Kuechler
Members: Sue Bollinger-Brown, LICSW
Shawn Hayward, LICSW

Abstract
The focus of this study was an exploration of the question: What is the relationship between supervision, support, and social worker burnout?” A random sample of social workers who are members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in Minnesota were invited to share their perspectives on this question through a mailed survey with 78 competed responses. Based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory respondents indicated that they had low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and high levels of personal accomplishment. The findings also indicated that respondents were satisfied with their supervisors and receive support from them. Informal support received was a mitigator of burnout with respondents believing their friends, family, and colleagues provided them with support. Responses to this survey support findings in the literature that emphasize the importance of supervision that is accessible and grounded in skillful practice.
Harm Reduction Model: Perspectives of Social Service Providers

by L. Ann Knudtson

Research Committee: 

Chair: Dr. Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D. 
Members: Denise Morcomb, MSW, LICSW 
Kristin Rotter, BSW, LSW

Abstract

This study explored the perspectives of social service providers regarding the benefits that derive from using the harm reduction model for chemical dependency treatment. The perspectives were examined through the conceptual frameworks of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the Trans-Theoretical Model (TTM) of behavioral change; specifically the stages of change within addiction. Using a quantitative design, the online survey instrument SurveyMonkey.com was utilized to conduct the survey instrument within this study. The survey instrument contained 21 items that were designed to operationalize the variables of safety, chemical use, relationships, values and ethics, and an overall improvement in the quality of life of individuals accessing harm reduction based treatment services. Data generated from this study that included 30 participants (N=30) were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of this study indicate that social service providers have observed an increase of safety, a decrease of chemical use, an improvement in relationships, support of social work values and ethics, and an overall improvement in the quality of life amongst clients that have utilized the harm reduction model for chemical dependency treatment. When viewed in relation with MI and TTM these findings indicate that the harm reduction model is effective in engaging clients at different stages of change; allowing for motivation to build effective behavioral change and progression through stages of change regarding addiction. The results of this study suggest implications for the field of social work to implement and further expand on treatment options based on effectiveness and congruence with the values and ethics of social work practice to better serve clients needs.
The Psychological Attraction to the Emo Subculture among LGBTQ Adolescents

by Sarah Kopp

Research Committee:  
Chair: Colin Hollidge Ph.D., LICSW  
Members: Sarah Shriver, LICSW  
Jeff Maciej, MSW, LGSW

Abstract

With the limited amount of empirical research on the Emo subculture, the researcher set out to explore the relationship between the Emo subculture and LGBTQ adolescents and whether there was a psychological attraction. Using a qualitative design, three mental health professionals, that had experience working with LGBTQ adolescents that adhered to the Emo subculture, were interviewed regarding their perceptions around five themes: risk factors associated with the LGBTQ population, Emo subculture, self-injurious behaviors, adolescent culture, and attachment. Data was analyzed using an inductive grounded theory coding process, which led to the development of themes that were used to compare to theory. The findings indicated a total of eight major themes that emerged from the interviews: risk factors, identity conflicts, communication difficulties, self-injurious behaviors explanations, insecure attachment, Emo creates a sense of community, self-injurious behaviors in Emo draws attention, and variations in Emo definition. This study opened up a dialogue about Emo, an unexplored subculture that has been linked to high risk behavior. It also gave a clearer understanding of what role culture plays in their life, especially in adolescence, since it is a period in which culture plays a large role. We now know that some adolescents are competitive with self-injurious behaviors in the Emo subculture and if mental health professionals witness that behavior occurring they can address it, offer support, and a better way of coping.
Social Workers’ Understanding of Disorganized Attachment caused by Trauma and Interventions Employed

by Tricia Krier

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Members: Krista Nelson, LICSW, LMFT
Lari Hacker, MA, LP

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore clinicians’ understanding of the coping mechanisms that children develop when they have developed disorganized attachment strategies caused by repeated trauma. This study surveyed LICSWs (Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers) in order to find out which interventions they are using with children with disorganized attachment strategies. Surveys were mailed to a random sample of 100 LICSWs in Minnesota and 32 completed surveys were returned. The data from the surveys was analyzed using Minitab. The findings indicated that, overall, the LICSWs believe they understand the coping mechanisms that children with disorganized attachment strategies develop. The data also showed that the LICSWs surveyed use play therapy most frequently, followed by family therapy, DBT, and EMDR. Most of the respondents reported seeing improvements in children’s disorganized attachment patterns after employing the interventions they use. However, a small percentage of the respondents reported not seeing any improvements. These findings indicate a need for more education in this area in order for clinicians to best understand children who have disorganized attachment strategies caused by repeated trauma. The findings also implicate a need for more research in this area in order to discover the best practices for working with children with disorganized attachment strategies.
Sudden grief and Loss in the Acute Care Center, How Professionals Can Help

by Naomi Kurth

Research Committee:

Chair: David Roseborough, Ph. D., LICSW
Members: Beverely Dyck, LICSW
Joanne Rocco Carter, RN, BS

Abstract

Sudden grief and loss is a reality that affects most people at some point throughout their lives. The purpose of this study was to explore and gain a deeper knowledge of what factors impact how people grieve sudden loss in different ways. The literature review examined best practice in dealing with those bereaving a sudden loss in the acute care setting. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’ five stages of grief were discussed as a way to conceptualize these as possible patterns of grief experiences. Individuals’ cultural and spiritual beliefs were discussed as an important aspect to help carry out if possible, the importance of demonstrating respect for patients, families, and of helping facilitate grieving. The roles of the multidisciplinary team, involving nurses, social workers, and chaplains were discussed in this research. This study examined responses to grief and loss in an acute care setting. This qualitative study consisted of seven 45-60 minute interviews in which the participants were asked to describe their lived experiences of dealing with patients and families suffering a sudden loss. Themes found in the interview were grief reactions are different for everyone, internal factors that affect proper grieving, external factors that affect proper grieving, how staff view their roles when there is a sudden loss, belief in Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’ five stages of grief, and the importance of staff showing emotions when there is a loss. The findings support the notion that most people grieve differently when experiencing a sudden loss. There was also support in the idea that grief support is not done by just one staff member instead it is a role that all members of the interdisciplinary team contribute to, this multi member support may enhance the experience and outcomes families have when going through a sudden loss in the acute care setting.
Clinicians’ Perspectives on the Horse’s Role in forming the Therapeutic Relationship in Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy

by Kathryn Ryan Langdon

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D. LICSW
Members: Theresa McPartlin, LICSW
Marielle Robinson, LSW

Abstract
Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is an experiential form of therapy where clients interact with horses, certified therapists, and equine instructors to learn more about their feelings, emotions, behaviors, and their own unique pattern of responding that emerge in the context of the therapeutic relationship. This qualitative study presents an historical perspective on therapeutic relationship theory, reviews EFP, a form of animal-assisted therapy, and highlights the importance of the horse’s role in forming the therapeutic relationship from the subjective experiences of clinicians who have practiced EFP.
Veterans’ Perceptions of Mental Health Services Offered in Rural Southern Minnesota

by Jamie Larsen, LSW

Research Committee: Chair: Peter Freeman, Ed.D, MBA, LICSW
Members: Kristin Wanhala, MSW
Bryan Schultz, Veterans Service Officer

Abstract
Rapid growth of wounded warriors and an aging population of veterans from historical war eras are bringing changes to those who have chosen to serve their country. To help ensure medical and mental health services are available Community Based Outpatient Clinics have opened to provide services in rural areas. However, even though the services are available many do not know that they exist. This study examined veterans’ perceptions of mental health care for veterans living in rural south central Minnesota. A quantitative study was done to examine veterans’ awareness of recent federal mandates requiring mental health services be more accessible geographically.
Supporting Humans Through the Loss of a Companion Animal: Veterinarian’s Perspectives

by Rena E. Ledin

Research Committee:  
Chair: Tamara Kaiser, PhD  
Members: Dr. Michael Henson, DVM  
Ted Bowman

Abstract

This study looks at how veterinarians working in community settings view their role in assessing and supporting a human when the human has lost or is faced with the loss of a companion animal. Companion animals are playing an increasingly important part in the lives of their humans and thus, when a human loses their companion animal, the grief reaction can be intense. This study interviewed eight veterinarians who work in a community setting about their role in supporting a human. The researcher found that veterinarians in a community setting reported not witnessing humans who exhibited a complicated grief reaction on a regular basis. Veterinarians also stated not having the adequate training or tools to assess an individual who is exhibiting severe grief over the loss of their pet. Veterinarians also stated that while it was not likely to have a social worker on staff in a small practice, they would likely benefit from having someone available for their clients or themselves for assistance through difficult situations. Strengths and limitations of this study are discussed as well as implications for future practice and research.
What Are the Barriers to First Generation Non-Christian Hmong Men Ages 35 to 65 Seeking Mental Health Services?

by Toua Lee

Research Committee:  
Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW, LICSW, M.Phil, Ed.D  
Members: Marilyn Cooper, MSW  
Zha Blong Xiong, Ph.D.

Abstract

The Hmong are a group of people who have their own unique culture and live collectively as one community. They have strong beliefs in using herbal medicines and traditional healing practices. However, the Hmong are not considered a monolithic group because they have many different sub-groups within the Hmong. The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore what are the barriers to preventing first generation non-Christian Hmong men, ages 35 to 65, from seeking mental health services. A qualitative method was used in this project because it was most appropriate at this stage of inquiry since foundational knowledge about Hmong men’s mental health concerns and needs did not yet exist. Grounded theory methodology was used as the primary tool of data analysis in this project. There were ten participants who were first generation non-Christian Hmong men participating in this project. The findings revealed that the perceived ineffectiveness of the mental health, language barriers, and role identities and expectations were the main barriers preventing this group of Hmong men to seek mental health service. The researcher also provided a deep discussion about the implication for the clinical social worker in maximizing access for first generation non-Christian Hmong men experiencing mental health concerns.
Animal Assisted Therapy: A Therapeutic Intervention for Children Traumatized by Abuse

by Yvonne LeMieux

Research Committee: Catherine Marrs, Ph.D., LCSW
Members: Sheryl Rorvig, LICSW
Serene Thortonson, LICSW

Abstract
Children traumatized by abuse from a caregiver is detrimental to their development evidenced by impairments in social, psychological, physical, biological, cognitive, self perceptual, behavioral and emotional functioning. Children abused and neglected by their caregivers often exhibit insecure attachment patterns. Without intervention, these traumatized children will most likely have maladaptive relationships with others, among many other interpersonal difficulties. The purpose of this research was to explore Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) as an intervention to heal insecure attachment issues in these children. Using a qualitative research design, clinicians who conducted AAT with children with insecure attachment issues were interviewed about how they use this method and how an animal may assist the child in healing their insecure attachment. The data consisted of the interview transcriptions, which were analyzed for common themes and placed into categories and then related to the previous literature. The findings indicated that animal assisted therapy aids in healing an insecure attachment pattern in an abused and/or neglected child through helping the child learn to regulate their emotions, using the animal as a transitional object of attachment, experiencing attunement through the relationship with the animal, using movement with the animal and EMDR methods to heal trauma, experiencing unconditional love, safety and acceptance from the animal, as well as building a sense of mastery through activities with the animal, which strengthens the child’s self esteem. These findings also call for further research into AAT to be recognized as a legitimate intervention for abused children suffering from insecure attachment issues.
Self-Care in Social Work: A Comparison Study

by Katie Lewis

Research Committee: Chair: Peter Freeman Ed.D., MSSW, Members: Molly Kellor, LGSW, Tina Knudson, LMFT

Abstract
Self-care in social work has become a pressing issue as the pressures on social workers continue to increase with the strained economy. The purpose of this study was to compare self-care between MSWs (Master Level Social Workers) and BSWs (Bachelor Level Social Workers) and identify areas of self-care utilized by social workers; determine if there was a significant difference in the self-care engagement level between the education levels; and determine if social workers, in general, believe that education has an effect on their ability to engage in self-care. Using a quantitative design, a survey was sent out to 80 social workers, 40 MSWs and 40 BSWs, 52 surveys were returned, of which 50 were deemed appropriate. Data were analyzed using the statistical analysis program, Minitab. The findings indicated that the social workers score high in the physical level of self-care, and score medium on the final four areas, emotional, psychological, spiritual and professional. MSWs scored significantly higher than BSWs only in the psychological area of self-care. The overall scores when compared were not statically significant. The final statistical analysis concerning education level and self-care as rated directly by the respondent was also statistically insignificant. Implications to this survey include need for increased promotion of self-care.
Co-morbidity: Assessment of barriers that impact successful treatment of clients with mental illness and addiction

by Ajda Lommen

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph. D.
Members: James L. Stolz, LICSW
Laura Mustazza-Biggham, MSW, LISW

Abstract
This research project was designed to provide a general overview of the relationships of dually diagnosed disorders, specifically mental health and chemical dependency. The purpose of this study was to explore a recent treatment program outcome to increase understanding of the relationships of factors that may contribute to successful and unsuccessful outcomes of treatment. One important question was used to explore this topic: what are the factors and barriers that impact successful and unsuccessful treatment outcomes for adults, 18 and older, diagnosed with co-occurring disorders in terms of mental illness and chemical dependency? Comorbidity is relevant to social work practice in that it appears in a wide range of social work settings, and dual diagnosis of mental health and chemical dependency is prevalent in clinical social work.
Mental Health and Recovery: Individuals Perspectives on the Journey of Recovery and the Factors that Help and Hinder Recovery

by Rebecca A. Long

Research Committee:
Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Members: Andrea Steele, MSW
Rachel Voller, Coordinator

Abstract
Recovery from mental illness is a unique, life-altering journey. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that help and hinder individuals in their process of recovery. In this qualitative study, interviews were conducted with 8 adults with major mental illnesses who self-identified as being in recovery. Data were collected and open coding was used to identify themes. All participants described engagement in life when defining recovery. Findings noted that participants most commonly reported the Community Support Program as a helpful mental health services in their recovery. Findings also emphasized the important role that mental health professionals have in helping recovery, especially those professionals who are caring, compassionate, and understanding. Hobbies and relationships with family and friends were also noted to be significant in an individual’s experience of recovery. However, family members and the prevalence and impact of stigma were viewed as a hindrance in recovery. Assistance with housing was viewed by participants as helpful in recovery. Recovery does not come without challenges, yet participants expressed a more positive view of self and a renewed hope as a result of their journey of recovery. This research study confirms that recovery is an active process that allows individuals with mental illnesses to engage in life in such a way that it gives purpose and meaning. Finally, individuals with mental illnesses have a desire to be heard and recognized as unique individuals with varied life experiences.
Social Workers Comfort in Assisting with End-of-Life Decision Making

by Mariah Lutter

Research Committee: Chair: Kendra Garrett, Ph.D., L.I.C.S.W
Members: Kathy Johnson, M.S.W., L.I.S.W
Scott Cartwright, M.D.V., B.C.C.

Abstract
This research explored social workers’ comfort in assisting with end-of-life decision making. This research was quantitative and cross-sectional. There were 80 nursing home social workers surveyed through Survey Monkey, with 24 responses received. Social workers were asked to rate their comfort and knowledge level regarding specific end-of-life discussions; social workers rated their comfort level lower than their knowledge level when it came to discussions about do-not-resuscitate and advance directives. Social workers rated their comfort level higher than their knowledge level when it came to discussions about hospice referrals, feeding tubes, intravenous therapy (IV’s) and antibiotic use. Implications included social workers reported feeling nervous initiating end-of-life discussions, feeling concerned that it might bring up negative emotions, and noting that patient wishes were sometimes disregarded. Conclusions included a need to bridge the gap so social workers feel equally as knowledgeable as they do comfortable when assisting patients/families with end-of-life decisions. Other suggestions are to provide further continuing education for social workers, to get input from families on the end-of-life process, and to have a “death review” (a review of what went well, what are areas for improvement and staff reflection) for the professional staff to examine the process.
Mindfulness and Self-Compassion: Social Workers’ Self-Care Practices to Alleviate Burnout

by Nicole Majerle

Research Committee:  
Chair:  Carol Kuechler, Ph.D.  
Members:  Merra Young, MSW, LICSW  
Jean Haley Walstrom, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Over the last three decades, researchers have sought to understand the phenomenon of burnout among helping professionals. The term burnout is most commonly conceptualized as a psychological syndrome caused by chronic interpersonal stressors at work and features three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of low personal accomplishment. In recent years, researchers have examined the self-care practices of mindfulness and self-compassion as mediating factors in the burnout syndrome. The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between mindfulness, self-compassion and the three factors associated with burnout from the perspective of Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers. A questionnaire based on three standardized self-report instruments was sent to a random sample of 330 Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers, with 145 respondents completing and returning the surveys for a response rate of 44%. Two respondents completed only half of the survey; 143 surveys were used in the analyses. Most of the respondents were over the age of 30 and had over 10 years of experience in social work practice. The findings indicate that the majority of participants had low to moderate levels of burnout and moderate to high levels of mindfulness and self-compassion. The majority of participants reported that they had training in mindfulness/self-compassion practices and/or training to alleviate burnout and that they regularly practiced self-care activities. A significant relationship was found among participants’ levels of mindfulness, self-compassion and the three factors associated with burnout. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of training young social work students in mindfulness-based self-care practices in order to counter the effects of the burnout syndrome.
Services Available to Adults with SPMI and Supports and Barriers to Accessing them: A Professional Perspective

by Hilary March

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to identify supports and barriers when accessing services for adults with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Professionals with an undergraduate degree in social services and experience working with adults with SPMI were interviewed (N=3). A snowball sample of three participants was successfully interviewed with an average of 11 years of experience. Due to this low response no results can be generalized to the greater population. Themes that presented themselves in the findings include supports and barriers in accessing services. The supports identified included professionals and financial assistance such as social security and general assistance. Participants did not see the family as a support in accessing services due to their lack of knowledge about the mental health system. Barriers that were identified included not knowing what services exist, the client not being able to identify how they might benefit from a service, lack of insurance or other practical barriers, being able to negotiate the financial assistance paperwork and requirements, and stigma. Due to the low percentage of adults with SPMI accessing services to assist them in their mental health recovery further research should be done to identify what barriers these adults are facing when trying to access these services. It is important to identify barriers so that we can change how these services are being provided in order to increase access.
Treatments for Re-experiencing Symptoms of Trauma in Children

by Jenna L. Maring

Abstract
This qualitative study examined therapeutic techniques that are used to treat re-experiencing symptoms of trauma in children, with specific attention paid to the treatment of trauma-based nightmares. Data was collected through seven semi-standardized interviews with mental health clinicians who treat traumatized children. Open coding methods were used to inductively analyze codes in the data to record common themes from the interviews. Themes that emanated from this study were separated into three categories: presentation of re-experiencing symptoms, treatment models, and challenges to treating trauma in children. Additionally, sub themes from each of these categories were identified and discussed. Findings from this study were consistent with those from previous research on this topic. Implications from this study suggest ideas for future research in this area, with hopes to enhance children’s mental health training, practice, and policy. Ongoing research in this area has the potential to enhance assessment and treatment for re-experiencing symptoms of trauma in children.
Juvenile Detention and the Strengths-Based Approach: A Case Study

by Alma Márquez

Research Committee:  
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D.  
Members: Michael Belton, MA  
Natalie Brown, LGSW

Abstract

Juvenile detention is an issue nationally and locally because of prevalence, financial cost, and the connection juvenile delinquency has to racial disparities and larger systemic issues like poverty, education and adult incarceration. Many counties are reforming their juvenile justice systems with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) model, and Ramsey County, Minnesota is one of those sites. There are a variety of intervention programs that range from supportive, or strengths-based - to punitive, or deficit-based. This research study investigated the approach used by staff at the Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center through qualitative measures. Data were analyzed through open coding and several themes emerged in the research. The findings of this study included five main themes: examples of change experienced by staff through the JDAI process; the feelings of the change process; the personal and institutional values articulated by staff; risk factors and protective factors for criminal behavior; and the hope of staff about youth’s ability to change. These themes have been discussed in connection to articles and reports on juvenile justice, reform projects, and strengths-based initiatives. This article also states recommendations for future research and continued reform of juvenile justice.
Police Officers Approaches and Interactions with Individuals with Mental Illnesses

by Sara Martin

Research Committee: Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Christie Matts, LICSW
Paul Schnell, MA, LSW

Abstract

Police officers are often the first to respond to emergency situations involving individuals with mental illnesses. Emergency response calls requiring police interventions for individuals with mental illnesses happen quite frequently, especially in urban areas. Due to the high frequency of calls involving individuals with mental illnesses, police officers need to have training and education regarding mental health. Some education and training is required, however the amount is not consistent. In this study police officer’s interactions with individuals with mental illnesses are explored. There is also a focus on the effectiveness of education and training for police officers regarding individuals with mental illnesses. The major findings from this study include all participants had some education and training regarding individuals with mental illnesses, all three were process-oriented and all three were concerned with safety during the vignettes of the survey. Some implications for social work practice were found such as the need for collaboration of social workers and police officers, trust in our fellow human service professionals and more research in regards to law enforcement’s interactions with individuals with mental illnesses.
The Effect of Religion on Female Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

by Marc T. Maus

Research Committee:

Chair: Tamara L. Kaiser, Ph.D
Members: Jane Hurely-Johncox, MSW
Reverend Robert Fitzpatrick

Abstract

The researcher sought to answer the following questions: In what ways is religion beneficial to women who have been abused? In what ways is religion detrimental to women who have been abused? Using a semi-structured, face to face interview format data were collected from six professionals who work with abused women. The results show that church teachings, biblical interpretations, family of origin and culture are often important factors in determining if and how an abused woman will perceive religion as being detrimental or beneficial to her. The study also looks at the way the professionals utilized religion in their work with the abused women.
Teacher’s Attitudes towards School Social Work

by Jamie McMahon

Research Committee:

Chair: Colin Holidge Ph. D, LICSW
Members: Gail McCollum B.A., M.A.
         Dan Dierfeldt LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to unravel teachers’ attitudes towards school social workers. By examining teachers’ attitudes towards school social work, this study hopes to uncover areas that teachers feel need improvement as well as those areas that are working well. School social work is frequently cut from the school districts. Because teachers work with both the students being served and the social workers, they have a unique perspective of the benefits of the services provided. Six licensed teachers who have worked in the school system for at least one year participated in this study. Data was gathered by conducting a semi-structured interview with each of the participants. This research shows that teachers in the special education setting feel as though school social work provides valuable services to students. Additionally they view school social workers as an extremely important asset to their teams. Participants in this study acknowledge that they can better serve students when they can collaborate with the school social worker.
Variability in Professional Response to National Health Care Reform

by Lauren McNelly, LSW

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.
Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW
Vicki Swan, LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this research project was to provide an exploratory analysis into health care professionals’ perceptions towards national health care reform and assess how these perceptions vary. Health care professionals directly observe the impact of health care, and health care discrepancies have on the patients they serve. The primary research questions of this study asks how the opinions of health care workers (administrators, physicians, nurses and social workers) compare with each other and are they comparable to what was being discussed with the current health care reform discussion and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010.

The findings of this study were that level of political involvement does vary by profession. Medical social workers were the profession that had the lowest levels of active political involvement through meeting with members of congress or participating in debates. Twenty four percent of social workers wrote letters to congress around health care reform. Twenty three percent of nurses had not participated in the health care debate before. Physicians reported that their highest concern in health care reform was malpractice reform mandates whereas administrators, nurses and social workers report that prescription cost regulation being the most important mandate. Each profession reported similar responses towards common ethical questions presented around health care. Over half of each profession indicated they would support an increase in taxes to help provide health insurance to everyone regardless of ability to pay. It is critical that health care workers ensure that they are actively involved in the creation of health care policy, especially since they have first-hand observations in the area of health care needs.
Family Matters: How Military Deployment Affects More Than Just Service Members

by Susan Messerli

Research Committee:
Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Kari Fletcher, MSW, LICSW
David Holewinski, LICSW, CBIS

Abstract
As a result of heightened military operational tempo following the initiation of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001 and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003, service members have experienced an increased number and duration of deployments. A review of literature demonstrated a gap in research regarding the impact such deployment-induced separations have on the relationship between parents (both service members and non-deployed spouses) and military children. The current study utilizes semi-structured qualitative interviews to gain insights into experiences of service members, non-deployed spouses and adolescents during adjustment periods throughout the deployment and reintegration cycle. The six participants within this study included two Reservists, three non-deployed spouses, and one female adolescent. Throughout all adjustment stresses, participants identified consistency in communication and routine as well as the camaraderie found within the “military family” as mitigating factors related to functional and emotional transitions affecting the parent-child dyad during deployment-induced separations and subsequent reunion periods. Implications exist for civilian service providers and educators offering support to service members and their families.
Living with Hope: Gay and Lesbian Baby Boomers’ Expectations after Retirement

by Yoshinobu Motoyama

Research Committee: Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW, LICSW, M. Phil, Ed.D.
Members: Martin L. Warren, Ph.D.
Jane Hurley-Johncox, LICSW

Abstract

Today, between one and three million gay and lesbian seniors aged 55 and over are estimated to live in the United States. Many gay and lesbian baby boomers have experienced significant life events which were associated with severe discrimination. Past research indicates that gay and lesbian baby boomers feel that they have been excluded from existing services and denied access to adequate healthcare and affordable housing. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to expand the understanding of aging gay and lesbian baby boomers’ concerns about healthcare and housing and how they could be helped by clinical social workers in aging well after retirement. Subjects of this study were obtained through convenience sampling (N=10). Data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The findings indicated that six subjects who are in a committed relationship stated that they think powers of attorney are important to them because they do not have the legal protection for gay and lesbian couples, that married couples have. A majority of the subjects reported that they want to keep themselves mentally and physically healthy and active as they age. They also want to try to set a realistic goal for where they will be living as they are getting to the age where they have limited physical ability. Implications for clinical social work practice are discussed.
Factors That Influence the Coming Out Process for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals: A Qualitative Study

by Teresa A. Movick

Research Committee: Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW, LICSW, M. Phil., Ed.D.
Members: Sharon Berndt, LICSW
Rae Kohl, BASW

Abstract
The coming out process for many LGB individuals can be a time filled with isolation, shame, rejection, and vulnerability. Yet for others, it can be a time of acceptance, hope, joy, and relief. The purpose of this study was to examine the coming out process from the LGB individuals own perspective. Using a qualitative design, 6 LGB adults were interviewed regarding the factors that influenced their own coming out process and the recommendations they have for social workers working with individuals going through this process. Data was analyzed using inductive methods in order to examine common themes and to connect findings back to the review of the literature. Findings indicated that the coming out process is different and challenging for each LGB individual as it can be influenced by numerous factors in a variety of ways. The courage it takes for these individuals to make the decision to come out to others not only deserves validation and support but should be accepted by social workers free of judgment. In doing this, social workers should also be willing to remain up to date on the issues that LGB individuals face and the resources available for these individuals in the community.
The Needs of Formal Caregivers in Nursing Homes

by Blythe E. Nelson

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members: Denise Morcomb, MSW
Kathy Siegling

Abstract
Demographic trends illustrate that as the number of older adults is increasing, the role of family or informal caregivers is decreasing. Similarly, the number of older adults residing in long-term care facilities (i.e., nursing homes) is steadily increasing. The role of formal caregivers is imperative to provide care for the anticipated demand. While this role is crucial, literature has found that formal caregivers have little preparation for addressing social and interpersonal interactions with patients. As a result of the extensive demands placed on formal caregivers, literature discusses the high rates of turnover, abuse in nursing homes, and the consequential impact this has on patients. The researcher chose to explore the needs of formal caregivers in nursing home settings to determine what challenges they experience and what services may benefit this population. Using a qualitative design, semi-standardized interviews were conducted among nine participants who are nursing aides/assistants or nurses currently working in nursing home settings. The results indicated a strong correlation with the current literature suggesting that the needs of this population are extensive and supportive services and increased training are imperative to providing quality care to patients in nursing home settings. This research also provided support for the imperative role of clinical social workers in addressing the needs of formal caregivers in nursing home settings.
Social Workers’ Attitudes Regarding Pet Loss

by Sara A. Nelson

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph. D.
Members: Diane Bauer, MSW, LICSW
Jeannine Moga, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Pet loss is one area of disenfranchised grief that has been largely ignored in the social work literature. Research suggests that clients are uncomfortable discussing the issue even with a trusted therapist. Sixty social workers practicing in the state of Minnesota were surveyed about their opinions regarding pet loss. Issues examined were how social workers ranked the seriousness of pet loss compared to the literature, how social workers perceived the distress experienced by children compared to adults and the elderly, whether or not pet owners would be more sensitive to pet loss than non-owners, whether there would be a difference in rankings between practitioners with varying degrees of experience, and whether social workers typically assess for pet loss when interviewing new clients. Results were mixed, and indicated that social workers typically respond sensitively to pet loss when the issue arises, but are likely not properly assessing for the experience. Implications for further research and social work practice are discussed.
Attitude Toward Same-Sex Couples as Adoptive Parents

by Vivian Nguyen

Research Committee: Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Rebecca Soreson, MSW, LGSW
Jessica Labrie

Abstract
Adoption process is one of the ways children find a home and a family to call it their own. It is important to examine the attitudes and beliefs adoption workers have toward same-sex couples as adoptive parents, which is the purpose of this study. Using a quantitative research design, self-administered surveys were distributed at three adoption agencies in the metropolitan area. Out of 42 surveys, 27 surveys were mailed back anonymously. Survey contained four demographic questions and 18 questions adapted from Attitudes Toward Same-Sex couples as Adoptive Parents Scale (ATSCAP). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation inferential statistics. The findings indicated that most of the adoption workers have positive attitudes toward same-sex couples as adoptive parents. In addition, a moderately strong correlation was found between adoption workers do not believe children raised by same-sex couples are more likely to experience issues with sexual identity and same-sex couples’s lifestyles are unsuitable as parents. And a strong negative correlation between adoption workers level of discomfort decrease when working with lesbian couples as prospective adoptive parents and the level of belief that lesbian couples do not have stable relationships. Due to small sample size in this study and lack of past research on adoption workers attitudes and beliefs, social workers and research should conduct a study with larger sample size. Or conduct a qualitative study to achieve a deeper and thorough understanding of this topic.
Their voices: Understanding the Challenges and Domestic Violence service needs of African Immigrant Women

by Florence Njoyi

Research Committee:

Chair: Phillip AuClaire, Ph.D.
Members: Richard Spratt, MSW
Amy Parson, MSW

Abstract

There has been extensive professional interest in domestic violence and social work practice in recent years, but little research have been done to understand the challenges and domestic violence needs of African immigrant women in Minnesota. This focus group study explored the challenges and domestic violence needs of African immigrant women in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. A qualitative research design was used to gather data from a group of Nigerian Ibo women’s group in the Twin Cities. The women were interviewed as a group by the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of their challenges and domestic violence needs. Content analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Findings revealed that most African immigrant women in Minnesota continuously experience domestic violence in their new environment as compare to their experiences in Africa, and are challenged by cultural beliefs and norms not to seek help or use the available domestic violence resources. The findings also revealed that African immigrants in general and African immigrant women in particular, need extensive education and awareness programs and services that are crafted to meet their cultural needs. The study has implications for social work, particularly the need to integrate cultural aspects of domestic violence into programs and services geared toward the betterment of African immigrant women, and to aid domestic violence service/program developers to create and integrate programs and services to meet their needs.
Reporting Rape: Is It Worth It?

by Danielle Norby

Abstract
There are multiple variables that impact a sexual assault survivor’s decision to report the incident to a number of support sources. The purpose of this project was to explore rape survivor’s responses about whether or not reporting to support sources was beneficial. Using a quantitative design, a flyer containing an online survey link was emailed to rape and abuse centers around the state of Minnesota. Data was analyzed and themes were identified that can be linked to related literature. The findings indicated that a majority of the respondents were female and between the ages of 16 and 24. Rape survivors were less likely to report the rape if alcohol was consumed by one or both parties, and a great majority of participants knew the perpetrator prior to the assault. Law enforcement was only found to be beneficial half the time. It was found to be the least beneficial support source. These findings indicate a need for education and training in the law enforcement and medical field.
Attitudes toward change: Clinicians’ perspective on motivational interviewing techniques with co-occurring disorders

by Krista Nyren

Research Committee:  
Chair:  Catherine Marrs, Ph.d., LCSW  
Members: Frances Leskicko, LP  
James Stolz, LICSW

Abstract
Motivational interviewing is a type of therapy that partners the client and the clinician to focus on the client’s internal drive and motivation to empower behavior change (Miller, et al., 2002). Motivational interviewing has shown positive results in increasing treatment engagement and adherence with co-occurring disorders. This qualitative research study examined the influential factors of change using the motivational interviewing approach for individuals with a co-occurring disorder in treatment. Specifically, the research design explored how a LICSW and/or other mental health professionals view the motivational interviewing approach in the treatment process of individuals who are diagnosed with co-occurring disorder. The term co-occurring disorder refers to a person who has both substance use and one or more mental illness(es) simultaneously (Bellack, 2006).  
This research study obtained eight mental health clinicians’ perspectives on the motivational interviewing approach. Several themes emerged from the transcribed interviews including: Empowerment, client centered relationship between the client and the clinician, internal and external motivators, etc. This research project discovered that motivational interviewing has been successful with co-occurring individuals and has been found to be an effective communication tool to elicit motivation from a client’s own words. All eight of the interviewed clinicians reported that the success of this approach for co-occurring individuals is due to empathy and the ability to build autonomy.
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Children with Separation Anxiety Disorder

by Rebecca H. Oachs

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D.
Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW
Andrea Patten, MSW

Abstract
This study consisted of a content analysis focusing on the topic of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and its use with children diagnosed with Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD). SAD is characterized by excessive and intense fears of separating from parents and caregivers and may be displayed in many different ways. The conceptual framework of CBT was used because of its efficacy in challenging and changing misperceptions in cognition like those found in anxious children. The method used was primarily qualitative using a content analysis to examine existing published studies and their themes. Overall, it was found that the conducted CBT interventions were helpful to children with SAD, which was evidenced by significant effect sizes across the studies. Conducting studies exploring SAD as a disorder will lead to a more detailed understanding of SAD, which can aid future practitioners in treating this disorder.
Attachment Treatment and Children with a Severe Emotional Disturbance

by Hallie L. Olson

Research Committee: Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Members: Scott Harman, MSW, LICSW
Mary Beth Wiig

Abstract
This is a qualitative study which focuses the treatment used for children with a severe emotional disturbance. The purpose of the research project was to understand if those who work with children diagnosed with a severe emotional disturbance are addressing attachment issues and if not, what they are doing for treatment. The literature strongly suggests that there is a notable link between a severe emotional disturbance and attachment problems. Eight individuals who work with children with a severe emotional disturbance were interviewed. Themes discovered throughout this process include the disorders being treated in the agencies, how they assess for treatment, medication, the theoretical framework used, strategies, specific interventions and the parent involvement within treatment. The findings of this study suggest that professionals do not seem to include attachment in their assessment of children and only in some ways does it seem to be included in treatment. Therefore more attention to attachment should be included in the assessment and treatment of children with a severe emotional disturbance.
The Influence of Cultural and Spiritual Beliefs on Domestic Violence: Perspectives of African American Women

by Donnita L. Osborn

Research Committee:

Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Cara L. Carlson, Ph.D., LICSW.
       Marisela I. Tototzintle, MSW

Abstract
Domestic violence is a widespread concern within our society, despite decades of attempts at prevention (Peled & Edleson, 1994; Stith, Rosen, & McCollum, 2003). Tjaden & Thoennes (2000) suggest that domestic violence has been described as more rampant among African-American women. However, when considering the seriousness of domestic violence in all communities, there still remains a scarcity of published literature focusing on African American battered women (Campbell & Gary, 1998; Coley & Beckett, 1988; Kanuha, 1996; Sullivan & Rumotz, 1994). This gap in literature may be the results of many professionals’ assumptions that African American battered women’s situations are the same as those of European American women (Campbell et al.; 1994; Crenshaw, 1994; Moore, 1995). In looking at dismantling this assumption, this researcher will examine the African American woman and domestic violence. The purpose of this study was to investigate how African American women understood and perceived the impact of domestic violence in their lives and how religious beliefs contributed to their understanding and perceptions. The research design for this study was qualitative in nature. The study consisted of questions that were aimed at exploring the thoughts and feelings of African American women’s perspectives on the impact of domestic violence in lives and in their community. Data for this study was gathered in semi-structured focus group settings, using a seven-question questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire ranged from basic views on domestic violence and interventions covered in the literature review. The questions asked included, “What constitute as domestic violence?” and, “How has domestic violence been addressed in their place of worship?” Other questions centered more on the participants concerns and views on domestic violence. There were a total of 10 participants who participated in the focus group discussions. The participants were African American women between the ages of 18-65. Through conducting the focus group discussions, the following themes, emerged to be key factors in how African American women understood and perceived domestic violence. The themes were as followed: (a) definition of domestic violence, (b) cultural factors, (c) societal factors, (d) spirituality, and (e) group dynamic. Through examining the above themes, that were found based on conducting the focus groups discussions as well as research gain in the literature review; this study concluded that cultural, spiritual, and societal factors all work together to shape African American women’s perspectives of domestic violence.
Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy Within the School Setting: A Study of Its Impact on Adolescent Depression

by Rachel B. Oshan

Research Committee: Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D.
Members: Shelley Theisen, LICSW
Cindy Barriga, LICSW

Abstract
This secondary data analysis studied the effectiveness of a CBT group intervention for adolescent depression within the school setting in a Midwestern, suburban school. This secondary analysis also utilized a more specific focus on the group’s effect on outlook on life, feelings of hopelessness, and suicidality. A quantitative single system design was utilized to analyze the secondary data gathered from the nonprobability, purposive sample of 24 participants, consisting of two subgroups (n1=9, n2=15).

The findings of this study indicated a clinically significant difference between pre- and post-intervention mean scores for both the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and Weekly Mood Questionnaire assessment tools for the overall sample. Utilizing more specific data available for the second subgroup, the mean scores for BDI-II specific items ‘Pessimism’, ‘Past Failure’, ‘Suicidal Thoughts or Wishes’, and ‘Worthlessness’ decreased, indicating a reduction in these indicators of depression. The mean scores for the Weekly Mood Questionnaire specific items ‘I thought life had been a failure’ and ‘I felt lonely’ also decreased, indicating a reduction in these indicators of depression. Mean scores for specific item ‘I enjoyed life’ slightly increased, and as the positive assessment items’ scores had been inverted for aggregated scoring purposes, this actually indicated a decrease for this assessment item. No change was found in mean scores for Weekly Mood Questionnaire specific item ‘I felt hopeful about the future’.

Implications for social work practice indicated by this study included increased implementation of school based interventions for the treatment of adolescent depression. Clinically trained professionals are necessary to effectively implement the treatment modality of group CBT within the school setting, as is further research regarding the effectiveness of this evidenced based treatment in combating adolescent depression.
Educational Options and Outcomes for Pregnant and Parenting Teenagers

by McKenna M. Owens

Research Committee: Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D. 
Members: Christy McCoy, MSW, LICSW
Sandy Naughton, BA

Abstract
This qualitative study explores the educational options for pregnant and parenting teenagers and examines how these programs impact their educational attainments and life outcomes. Six interviews were completed with current students attending an alternative learning center for pregnant and parenting teenagers in the metro-area. A number of themes that emerged are also found in both existing research: improved school performance, supportive and accepting school environment, specialized curriculum unique to teenage mothers, assistance acquiring material resources and flexible school policies and individualized education. Implications for social work practice and future research is also discussed.
Community and Education Institution Support and Understanding Reported By Same-Sex Couples Who Have Adopted

by Heather L. Partridge

Research Committee:          Chair: Catherine L. Marrs, Ph.D
Members:    Rebecca Nicklay, LISW
            Carey Winkler, LICSW

Abstract
This is a qualitative study which focuses on same-sex couples who’ve adopted and the impact community and educational institutions have on their families. The purpose of the research project was to examine the obstacles faced by same-sex couples who have adopted or are wishing to adopt. Eight individuals who self identified as being in a same-sex relationship and had adopted a child/children with their partner voluntarily participated in a structured, face-to-face interview. The experiences shared by each of the eight individuals constructed a picture of how community, educational institutions and churches impact their families. Themes discovered throughout this process include: reasons for adoption, cultural competence within the adoption process, obstacles faced during the adoption process, impact of sexual orientation on process, post-adoption services, challenges to family system, and support systems. The findings of this study suggest that participants’ sexual orientation impacted the adoption process because there was a lack in education and awareness surrounding legal, community and educational institutions. Therefore with continued education and advocacy for legal rights and benefits to same-sex couples, stigmas and misperceptions will decrease.
The Magic of Resilience in the Face of Adversity

by Erin M. Pesta

Research Committee:

Chair: Philip AuClaire, PH.D
Members: Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW
        Molly Roark, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Children have a number of protective factors (positive influences in their lives that contribute to healthy child development) and risk factors (influences that increase the chances for harm) during their developmental years that impact resiliency. Resiliency is a phenomenon that creates good outcomes even when adversity is threatening normal adaption and development. Eight practitioners were interviewed about their experiences working with resilient children in a shelter and residential setting in an urban community. This research identifies risk and protective factors in the lives of those children. Common themes include: characteristics of the family, supportive relationships, and community network. Practitioners build resilience in children by creating a trusting relationship with them, teaching them skills, and helping them to build a network of support. Several examples of the lives of the children with whom the practitioners worked are included. All the practitioners discussed the presence of resiliency within the children with whom they work.
Nature, Stress, and Women: An Exploratory Study of Older Women

by Carol Ann Petersen

Research Committee:

Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW, LICSW
Martha Reis, Ph.D.

Abstract

Women, compared to men, are more likely to report extreme stress, are more concerned about their levels of stress, report that their stress levels have increased over the past five years, and indicate that they manage their stress poorly. The World Health Organization estimates that by the year 2020, psychological and stress-related disorders will be the second leading cause of disabilities in the world. The beneficial effects of nature on psychological and physiological issues in children and college students has been well documented. Having noted a lack of research on the effects of nature on stress in women, the current study used a qualitative design to explore how nature effects stress in older women. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from seven women, 52-76 years of age. The data was analyzed using an inductive approach and coded for themes. Findings indicate that outdoor experiences in nature positively effect participants' feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and physical sensations and that simply being in nature, rather than doing or accomplishing a task, is sufficient to effect therapeutic, stress-reducing changes in their feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and physical sensations. Participants noted that nature offers a sense of connection to self, to other beings, and to something larger i.e. the holy/god/mystery. Implications for social work practice and policy are discussed.
The Perspectives of Professionals on the Sexuality of Individuals with a Traumatic Brain Injury

by Samantha M. Plumski

Research Committee: Chair: Kendra Garrett, PhD
Members: Jennifer Samaha, MA Social Work
Serene Thornton, LICSW

Abstract
Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries experience sexual needs and desires like the rest of society; however, they face challenges of relearning many functions of daily life again after their injury. Societal beliefs about human sexuality have a tendency to be negative and limit the education and training that is provided to those assisting individuals to relearn daily functions as well as to those living a life with a brain injury. The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of professionals on the sexuality of individuals with a Traumatic Brain Injury. The research specifically focused on education, opinions and behaviors, and experiences of professionals serving individuals with a Traumatic Brain Injury. Using an anonymous survey, 59 participants answered questions regarding their specific perspectives on: education, opinions and behaviors, and experiences. Data was analyzed primarily in an inductive manner, due to results being gathered from general experiences and opinions. The findings also gave way to a comparison analysis of the two participating agencies. Findings showed a need for education and training in the area of sexuality and Traumatic Brain Injury. Findings indicated a variety of experiences and opinions regarding the sexuality of individuals with a Traumatic Brain Injury. Findings indicated a need for further research regarding the topic of sexuality and Traumatic Brain Injury. Increased education and training may raise professionals comfort level when working with individuals with a Traumatic Brain Injury in regards to sexuality. Increased research may guide the development and implementation of increased education and training in the area of sexuality and Traumatic Brain Injury.
Abstract
Understanding what is really impactful as we graduate with our degrees in Social Work and enter the workforce is the underlying focus for this research paper. Using the Council of Social Work Education, CSWE, as a guideline, questions were designed using the nine Core Contents of Values and Ethics, Diversity, Populations at Risk and Social Economic Justice, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Welfare and Policy, Social Work Practice, Research, Field Internship, and Field Seminar that are infused into the educational curriculum we learn in both undergraduate and graduate Social Work Degrees. Using the question of, “How well did your Social Work Core Content curriculum prepare you for your work environment”, respondents were asked, “What did” and “What didn’t work” from your education, to prepare you for your transition from social work student to Social Work professional. The survey had twenty-eight Masters in Social Work graduates, and have been a Licensed Graduate Social Worker, LGSW, for the last five years in the State of Minnesota. The results from the survey showed that the LGSW’s rated the Core Contents of Values and Ethics, and Field Internship, highest; and then Diversity, and Populations at Risk and Social Justice, were more impactful towards preparing them for their Social Work Practice.
Prevalence of Adolescent Cyberbullying: Secondary Analysis

by Natasha M. Privratsky

Research Committee
Chair: Ken Root, M.S.S.W., Ph.D.
Members: Danny Porter, MSW LICSW
Nancy Sabin

Abstract
In recent years bullying has moved beyond the traditional face to face exchange of words and violence into the world of technology through cyberbullying. Cyberbullying involves the use of cellular telephones, instant messaging software, social networking websites, blogs and other internet websites to send or post defamatory words, pictures or videos about the victim. The purpose of this study was to add to the growing body of knowledge about cyberbullying by determining the degree and frequency to which cyberbullying behaviors are occurring for adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18, and whether these adolescents reported cyberbullying incidents to a school official. This study used data collected from the 2007 National Crime Victimization Survey and the School Crime Supplement. The results indicated that four percent of participants experienced at least one of the three forms of cyberbullying presented. The results of this study further found a significant relationship between the participant’s household income level and experiencing hurtful internet posts, and a significant relationship between the participant’s age and experiencing hurtful internet posts. These results are representative of national data and should highlight the seriousness of cyberbullying situations and potentially tragic outcomes of individual cases.
Burnout Among Professional Social Workers

by Brenda L. Rhode

Research Committee: Chair: Ken Root, Ph. D.
Members: Ross Aalgaard, MDiv, MSW, LGSW
Shawn Mai, MDiv

Abstract
The purpose of this research study was to explore the prevalence of burnout among social workers who were employed at for profit and non-profit social service agencies and organizations in Minneapolis, St. Paul and the surrounding area. A recruitment letter, directed to the Social Work department, was sent to 224 for-profit and non-profit agencies and organizations throughout Minneapolis, St. Paul and the surrounding area. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and participants had to be 18 years of age or older. The survey consisted of five questions designed by the researcher, as well as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

A total of 78 surveys were completed online, which delivered a response rate of 35 percent. Given the data collected, 54 (69 percent) participants did not experience burnout, and 24 (31 percent) did experience burnout. There were three additional areas of interest that were explored. These areas of interests were: (1) who experienced more burnout, males or females, (2) who experienced more burnout, social workers that work in public or private occupational settings, (3) did younger social workers experience burnout more than older social workers. Chi-square tests were used to see if there were any associations between variables.

This study helped bring literary awareness to the topic of burnout, and more specifically, burnout among social workers. This study also presented research data regarding the prevalence of burnout among social workers. Furthermore, research literature and knowledge relating to professional burnout is of value to agencies and organizations, people working within the social services profession, and clients who utilize the services provided by these helping professionals.
A Needs Assessment of LGBTQ Youth in Secondary Schools: The Impact of Student Support Groups

by Kathryn D. Richey

Research Committee: Chair: David Roseborough, Ph.D., LICSW
Members: Stacy M. Husebo, MSW, LICSW
Deb Ludwig, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
The intent of this qualitative study was to examine the effectiveness of secondary school support networks presently in place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning adolescents, from both the perspective of participants and advisors. This research was qualitative in nature; asking participants and advisors of LGBTQ student groups which take place in a school setting, what they feel is working well or could be improved. The sample for this study was made up of six high school students, from two Minneapolis metro area high schools, who are presently participating in their school’s GSA or other LGBTQ support group, as well as an advisor from each group. The question format used was semi-structured, with eight prepared questions. All were designed with room for elaboration, asking the interviewees to discuss their personal experiences in their GSA or LGBTQ support group. In order to uncover themes, the interviews conducted for this study were transcribed and reviewed to identify codes present in the data. The findings included: a comparison of the two types of groups, including limitations of GSAs and strengths of the support group model, and the significance of group size. It was also found that LGBTQ students place a high level of importance on political action, but feel they have minimal impact on the climate of their schools. There was discussion of name calling, the level of staff support, and trends for groups that are most likely to be prejudiced against LGBTQ students. Also uncovered, was the significance of outside support, and the increase in high risk behaviors when there is a lack such assistance. The event of coming out revealed a latent theme as well; according to this qualitative study, adding the pressures of being LGBT or Q continues to compound the complexities of the high school experience. The data were compared to previous research and implications for the field of social work and future research are discussed.
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Child Welfare Social Workers Knowledge and Intervention Strategies

by Cimena Rogers and Melanie Bayer Witthoft

Research Committee: Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D.
Members: Laura Newton, MSW
Cathy Bruer-Thompson, MSW

Abstract
This study sought to investigate FASD knowledge, intervention strategies, and the implementation of these interventions in county child welfare workers’ practice with clients diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. According to the literature review, there is significant research supporting the hypothesis that human service professionals and child welfare social workers are not well prepared to provide services to clients diagnosed with FASD. In this research a total of 195 surveys were completed by child welfare and human service professionals from Ramsey and Hennepin Counties in Minnesota. The results of the survey indicated three distinctive elements of the research question, participant definition and identification of FASD, interventions for FASD, and competency of child welfare social workers. The research findings suggest that the county employees surveyed have more knowledge than these researchers’ hypothesized. However, the researchers’ attempt to identify the beliefs of respondents in regards to the myths surrounding FASD concluded that there is still a misunderstanding in regards to the cause and affects of FASD.
Clinical Social Worker Perceptions of Clients with Traumatic Brain Injury

by Anne K. Rooney

Research Committee: Chair: Peter D. Freeman Ed.D., LICSW
Members: John H. Shaffer, LICSW
Erin Preese, MA- ESL

Abstract
This qualitative study examined clinicians’ perceptions about working with clients with Traumatic Brain Injury. The findings from this study were based on six interviews with Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers with experience in working with clients with Traumatic Brain Injury. A content analysis was completed to analyze the transcribed interviews. Results indicated that the clinical social workers tended to view clients with Traumatic Brain Injury as challenging or difficult to work with based on the perceptions that the clients generally have negative behaviors; would be able to retain little or no information from the therapeutic process; or that information would be disregarded when needed due to impulsivity. Implications of this study include the importance of increased and better education and training for clinicians; better policies on prevention and programming; and the need for additional research on this topic.
Recent Social Work Graduates’ Perceived Competency Working with Clients who have a Developmental Disability

by Allisa M. Rundle

Research Committee: Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Dana Gilbertson, MSW, LICSW
Mary Miller, MS, ECSE

Abstract
This study sought to explore recent social work graduates’ perceived competency working with clients who have a developmental disability. As a result of the large number of Americans living with a developmental disability, it is likely that many social workers will encounter a client with such a disability during their practice. Therefore, it is imperative that social workers be prepared to address the needs of developmentally disabled clients and that they feel competent in their ability to do so. Through interviews of six recent social work graduates, this study gained insight and personal accounts about social workers’ preparation and competency in working with the developmentally disabled population. Findings showed that only one out of the six participants felt competent in their ability to deliver services to clients with a developmental disability. Participants also indicated that increased training and education on working with clients who have a developmental disability may help them to feel more competent to deliver services.
Abstract
Teenage pregnancy is a well known concern in the United States. This study has explored factors that may be precursors to teenage pregnancy. The question, what are contributing risk factors of teenage pregnancy in a rural area was asked and professional and community experiences were addressed. Review of current literature on teenage pregnancy identified parent and teen relationship issues, access and understanding of healthcare resources, mental health issues, and poverty as the primary contributing risk factors of teenage pregnancy (Carter & Spear, 2002; Ekstrand, Larsson, Von Essen, & Tyden, 2005; Quinlivan, Tan, Steele, & Black, 2004; Remez, 2000; Young, Turner, Denny, & Young, 2004). This information from the literature was compared to the results of three focus groups in a rural community. Results of the focus groups and literature review were able to show that similar risk factors put teenagers at risk of becoming pregnant. The focus on the rural perspective did not conclusively show that living in a rural area greatly increased the rate of pregnancy.
Exploring Relationship Based Gender-Specific Programming for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

by Beth Scheetz

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph. D.
Members: Amelia Goodyear, MSW, LGSW
Kate Richtman

Abstract
The increasing number of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system is a multi-systemic dilemma. The purpose of this project was to explore the promising relationship-based gender specific programming that exists for females in the juvenile justice system. Using a combination of secondary data analysis from previously gathered surveys and qualitative interviews regarding the feelings and perceptions of two females currently enrolled in a gender-specific program, the effects of such programming was explored. Descriptive statistics were run on the quantitative data from previous participants and content analysis was applied to the qualitative interviews to develop themes. The findings indicated that gender-specific programming improved relationship quality in the girls’ lives and that the relationship aspect of the program was helpful to the members. The respondents reported feelings of support and respect while in the program. These finding demonstrate a positive response and attitude toward gender-specific programming. However, due to the limited number of interview respondents in this study further research is needed to gain a more in-depth look into gender-specific programming in order to continue improving programs for females in the juvenile justice system.
Clinicians’ Perceptions about Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

by Coreen Schoep

Research Committee:  
Chair: Peter Freeman, Ed.D., MSSW, LICSW  
Members: Cindy Heveron, MS, LSC  
Rhonda Nietfeld-Sundermann, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
A child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) impacts the dynamics of an entire family. The purpose of this project was to explore services that are available for the treatment of symptoms of ASD; to determine clinicians’ views on these forms of treatments, and how families cope with having a child with ASD. A positivistic research study was used to investigate the perceptions of mental health clinicians’ views about therapeutic services for children with ASD. A survey was sent to a random list of 100 Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW) received from the MN Board of Social Work. Data was analyzed using a descriptive statistical analysis. Research indicated that the best form of treatment for ASD children is learning social skills such as communication and coping skills.
Utilizing Body Based Therapies with Individuals Who have Experienced Trauma

by Wendy A. Schulz

Research Committee: Chair: Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D
Members: Steve Wilson, MA, LP
Pam Sohlberg, MA, LSW

Abstract
The impact that traumatic experiences has on individuals is multifaceted. Currently there are a variety of therapeutic modalities used to treat clients who have experienced trauma. Recently advances have been made in understanding how trauma impacts the individual on a biological and physiological level. This research has legitimized and contributed to the expansion of mental health professionals integrating the body in therapeutic practice with clients who have experienced trauma. There is a need for empirical research that explores the efficacy and outcomes of body based therapeutic interventions. The purpose of this study was to explore the usefulness of treating trauma using body based methods and how clinicians are utilizing the body to promote change in traumatized individuals. The aim of this paper was to present a qualitative study that explored the question: how are body oriented psychotherapies effective interventions in generating change when working with trauma victims and how are they being used by clinicians to do so? Interviews were conducted with 10 therapists from a metropolitan area in the Midwest. A qualitative method was used to conduct this research in order to give interviewees the opportunity to expound on their experiences and describe case examples. Data gathered in the interviews focused on body based therapeutic interventions that professionals found useful when treating traumatized clients and the efficacy of those modalities. Clinicians reported many elements that facilitated in the therapeutic process for their clients including education, the therapist themselves, a sense of safety, self-awareness in the moment and having experiential moments; instilling these elements through the mind and the body led to integration and healing. All aspects of the therapeutic process and integrating the body into that process were seen as factors that contributed to the changes seen in clients. The impact that each component had on clients, as well as the overall process was what made body based therapies effective when working with individuals who had experienced trauma. The neurobiological and physiological impact that trauma has on the individual was believed to be the basis as to why engaging the body and the therapeutic process was logical and effective. These findings substantiated the value of using body based therapeutic interventions with individuals who have experienced trauma and calls attention to the need for further outcome based studies.
Palliative Care Teams: Medical Social Workers’ Perspectives

by Emily Jean Steigauf

Research Committee:
Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Karen S. Cooper, LICSW
Rebecca Nosan, PHN, CNP

Abstract
Among the advances in modern medicine is a service known as palliative care. The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions about palliative care from the perspective of medical social workers within an inpatient hospital setting with a solo practitioner model. Using a qualitative design, five volunteer hospital medical social workers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of palliative care, its advantages and disadvantages, and their perceptions of the role of social work in palliative care. Interviews were conducted and data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicated that most of the participants associated palliative care with the end-of-life service known as hospice. Participants identified advantages and disadvantages of palliative care. A couple of advantages identified included, positive collaboration among the palliative care practitioner and hospital unit social worker, and overall positive experiences working with palliative care clinicians who look at the patient and family as a whole while addressing their emotional needs and providing assistance with pain and symptom management. Two main disadvantages identified included role overlap and lack of communication in some cases. The participants described attributes of a palliative care social worker as being similar to those of a medical social worker within a hospital such as compassion, empathy, and a working knowledge of the social work systems perspective.
Factors That Influence Social Work Practitioners’ Interest in Gerontological Social Work

by Alison M. Stemme

Abstract

The population shift is one of the prime catalysts of the push for research on gerontological social work. The need for passionate and competent social workers to serve the aging population has been a concern for the field of social work since the beginning of this trend. This study sought to build upon existing research and answer the question: “What are the factors that influence social work practitioners’ interest in working with older adults?” A total of 42 randomly selected social workers belonging to the National Association of Social Workers MN chapter responded to a survey containing quantitative and open-ended questions. It was found that relationships with older adults throughout life, exposure to aging-related topics and specific gerontologic courses in college and perception of the field were the major influencing factors. Strategies to increase interest in practice with older adults that came from the study were to increase coursework and curriculum in college specific to aging-related practice, publicly educating people of the need of gerontological social workers and the career opportunities and increased compensation for jobs. Implications for practice and policy are advocacy by the profession for more effective and stronger practice for older adult clients and educating practitioners on the increasing need for competent gerontological social workers either by continuing education opportunities or in college course curriculum, and higher compensation for practitioners’ working in the gerontological field.
How Can Social Workers Affect the Cumulative Stress of Hospital Nurses?

by Laura Storkamp

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the affect social workers could have on the cumulative stress hospital nurses experience. The researcher utilized a non-random convenience sample and interviewed nine female Registered Nurses with a range of one to 33 years of experience. Literature on the stress in nurses was reviewed. Findings from the interviews indicate that nurses experience stress at work from three main levels: macro, mezzo, and micro. Macro-level stressors include such things as the economy, mezzo-level stressors include the physical work environment and relationships with co-workers and micro-level stressors include aspects of their personal lives that nurses may bring to work. Budget cuts and the economy were a universal stressor as was the fact that personal stressors could affect one’s workday. All nurses interviewed reported that a social worker available for staff use at a hospital would be utilized to provide some practical and well thought out stress reduction strategies. In addition, although the literature review and interviews were both focused on the stress nurses experience, both of these sources supported the idea that despite being a stressful profession, nurses received many benefits from this job.
Social Workers Attitudes, Opinions, and Views of Psychiatric Advance Directives: A Qualitative Study

by Sadie K. Strong

Abstract

Psychiatric Advance Directives are legal documents that can be used to state advance wishes for psychiatric treatment in the event that a person cannot competently make decisions for themselves. The purpose of this project was to explore the views and opinions of social workers on these documents and to determine how often they are apart of their work. Using a qualitative design, eight volunteers employed at a hospital in Minneapolis were interviewed regarding their use of, opinion of, and views on Psychiatric Advance Directives. Data were analyzed using content analysis, which guided coding and interpreting the data. The findings indicated that most social workers had either never encountered a patient with a Psychiatric Advance Directive, or that they had encountered one or two patients that had one. Although most social workers did not have direct experience using the documents, they offered opinions and suggestions for how Psychiatric Advance Directives might be best used with those with mental illness. These findings show that Psychiatric Advance Directives are not commonly used documents that patients have and that much more research and education is needed in this area.
The Degree of Integration of Traumatic Experiences into Veterans Personality

by Jason Thymian

Research Committee: Chair: Jessica Toft Ph.D
Members: Mark Frenzel MSW, LICSW
         Sheryl Rorvig MSW, LICSW

Abstract
Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a major mental health concern for returning war veterans and veterans of previous wars. The impacts of PTSD on veterans can be significant, affecting every aspect of the individual’s life. While it is a known concern, little research exists on assessing and screening PTSD in veterans. This research explored the impact of traumatic events on personality among veterans in Minnesota. A cross-sectional survey, the Centrality of Events Scale, was administered to 183 veterans at multiple veterans’ organizations in the metro area. This scale collected quantitative data surrounding the impact of the traumatic events as well as demographic information. Results indicated a high integration of trauma into personality which implies a potentially high rate of PTSD, as well as demonstrating a high correlation between the military occupational specialty and PTSD. Furthermore, although trauma was significantly incorporated into personality, very few of the respondents had sought counseling. The results supported the extensive research of the impact of PTSD on the internal world of the veteran. The researcher explored and discussed areas for further research such as research into specific treatments based on the veterans occupation, or how integrated the traumatic events have become.
Living What We Teach

by Cynthia J. Tri

Research Committee
Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D. L.I.C.S.W.
Members: Anu Sharma, Ph.D. L.P.
Arlen Carey, Ph.D. L.I.C.S.W.

Abstract
Work is often cited as a primary cause of stress. Strained family relationships with spouses and children also lead to stress. However, there are ways to reduce the feeling of stress. Social workers provide many services to clients that include mental health and stress reduction strategies. While social workers provide these services, there is little known about their own personal practices. This research is a qualitative study that explored the relationship between what stress reduction strategies social workers employ with their clients and what they practice themselves. The purpose of this research was to assess if social workers practice what they teach their clients. Using a narrative interview process, five social workers at the Bachelor level and three social workers at the master level were interviewed. Findings indicate that social workers strongly believe that stress reduction strategies are very important to practice and teach clients, however, overall results suggest that social workers don’t always practice what they teach their clients.
Job Loss Adjustment and the Impact of Partnered Status for Unemployed Women

by Maya Tubwon

Research Committee:  
Chair: Ken Root, Ph. D.  
Members: Cara Carlson, LICSW, Ph.D.  
Joseph T. Crowe M.S.

Abstract
The Great Recession has forced millions of workers to the sidelines. While the impact of women in the workforce has received a fair amount of attention, what is the impact of a working woman being forced to the sidelines through job loss? In order to aid women in one of the most difficult challenges of their lives it is necessary to understand the adjustments that confront them. This research study sought to aid in the understanding of the processes of adjustment to job loss made by unemployed women; by determining if some of the worst impacts of job loss adjustment could be limited via partner-based relationships. The quantitative analysis found that job loss adjustment for unemployed single non-partnered women meant increased stress, changed pursuits and habits, a negative view of the future, and missing certain aspects of work. Being in a partnered relationship was found to reduce the intensity of stress, reduce negative views of the future, and increase the likelihood of equally missing workplace social interaction an economic rewards. The findings show that women in partnered relationships maintained a better overall level of well-being than non-partnered unemployed women who were experiencing job loss. It was concluded that an opportunity exists to better serve both partnered and non-partnered women better in adjusting to job loss. In order to achieve this goal more research should be directed on the connection between job loss adjustment and the quality of the partnered relationships unemployed women maintained after job loss.
Wilderness Therapy and the Impact on Adolescent Female Self-Efficacy: An Exploratory Study

by Ryanne Underhill

Research Committee: Chair: W. Randolph Herman, MSW, LICSW, M. Phil, Ed.D
Members: Jane Hurley-Johncox, MSW, LICSW
Peggy Pond, Youth Worker

Abstract
A facilitated wilderness experience has a significant impact an adolescent female’s ability to cultivate a strong sense of self-efficacy by learning skills that can be applied to their lives after the experience. This qualitative study explores the perceived changes in an adolescent female’s levels of self-efficacy through perceptions of experienced wilderness facilitators. For this study, six skilled wilderness facilitators were interviewed, who averaged 11 years in the field. Findings determined a wilderness experience successfully builds levels of self-efficacy by offering an adolescent female a place to learn and practice skills related to survival and then processing these learnings both individually and in a group format. There were barriers to forming self-efficacy as noted by the respondents that included the lack of support in their home environment as well as their readiness to make the changes needed to grow. This study also found that a wilderness experience was able to positively affect body image and skill development. The study underlined the importance for social workers to connect their clients with relevant therapies, and wilderness experience will allow clinical social workers to expand their ability to provide complete and competent service to clients. Future research that interviews adolescent females about their experience of self-efficacy and wilderness therapy is warranted. Other avenues that to explore also include the effects on body image, competency and long-term impacts of the experience.
LICSW Barriers for Hmong Social Workers

by Jae Yang

Research Committee:

Chair: W. Randolph Herman, Ed. D.
Members: Valandra, LISW
Yia Thao, LSW

Abstract

The purpose of this clinical research paper was to explore the barriers Hmong social workers face in obtaining the LICSW licensure. The researcher presented background information on Hmong history, culture, and the licensure process. The researcher interviewed eight Hmong individuals who have earned a MSW for their perspective on barriers. Participants generally noted that the licensure exam and cost associated with licensure were issues. Other themes presented in this research was family influence, professional education, unique aspects of Hmong community and culture, benefits of licensure, ways through the obstacles, challenges with MSW program, influence of Hmong peers, and role of the employer. Additionally, implications for social work practice and recommendations for future research were discussed.
Living Positive: Mental Health and Living with HIV/AIDS in Greater MN

by Marcy Yarger

Research Committee: Chair:  Sarah Ferguson, PhD., LISW
Diane Knust, MSW, LISW
Will Lyne, MSW, LICSW

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to identify the mental health issues of people living with HIV/AIDS in rural Minnesota and how these issues may intersect with gender, substance abuse and medication adherence within the context that all these factors can play an influential role in determining quality of life. The Client Diagnostic Questionnaire (CDQ) was used to screen forty two PLWHA living in rural MN who received medical case management services. The CDQ screens for depression, anxiety, panic, substance abuse, PTSD and psychosis.

This research used descriptive statistics and chi squares to analyze the data. The percentages of positive mental health screenings in each category of the CDQ, adherence levels, and the significant findings of co-occurrence of drug abuse and major depression and anxiety and alcohol abuse were discussed in this research. The sample size of this research was small but provides initial findings that support further study. The implications of these findings include the need for on-going mental health screenings and the importance of mental health services to people living with HIV/AIDS in rural MN. Further research is needed to understand how mental health affects an individual’s overall health for PLWHIA and the influencing factors for medication adherence.
Cyberbullying: Parents’ Perceptions Compared to Students’ Perceptions

by Sarah Yeiter

Research Committee

Chair: Peter D. Freeman, Ed.D., MSSW, LICSW
Members: Kendra Garrett, PhD
Roxanne Fox, CAGS

Abstract

Bullying is not a new event in the lives of children. However, cyberbullying is a new form of bullying that has emerged which occurs beyond the classroom and playground. Cyberbullying has become one of the most prevalent forms of bullying among youth today due to the huge growth in technology. The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions between parents and students about cyberbullying. The survey asked both students and their parents who they believe is involved in cyberbullying, when and where they believe it happens, if they were aware of anti-cyberbullying programs at their school and where they could go for support if they had concerns with cyberbullying. Using a quantitative design, an online survey was presented to a sixth grade class in Southeastern Minnesota and their parents. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents are not aware of cyberbullying among their peers or their child’s peers. The majority of respondents were aware of cyberbullying and where it occurs but were not aware of any interventions or anti-cyberbullying programs provided by their school.