CLINICAL RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACTS

2011
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2011

School of Social Work
St. Catherine University
And
University of St. Thomas

Saint Paul, MN
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Parental Perceptions on Strengthening Attachment in Adoption
by Naomi L. Adams

Research Chair: Annette Semanchin-Jones, Ph.D Candidate
Members: Margaret A. Thomsen, LICSW; Amy Ebbesen, BSW

Adoptive parents face specific challenges when facing the struggles that can come from an adoption. The painful history of the adoptive child can result in continuous psycho-social and behavioral issues that affect attachment. The purpose of this project is to examine the adoptive parent’s perceptions on support and resources that helped to strengthen attachment in their adoption. Using a qualitative design, 7 adoptive parents who have adopted one to two children, 2 years to 25 years in post adoptive status were interviewed to explore their perceptions on interventions that strengthen attachment. Patterns of best practices were uncovered, including helpful techniques, supports, and resources that strengthened the attachment of their new family as well as was missing supports during both pre and post adoption. The pre and post adoption support and resources the adoption agency provided were found to be key in building a new family. By supporting adoptive families with attainable, consistent and reliable connections for professional guidance, social workers can strengthen adoptive families with simple techniques and education to strengthen and build healthy attachments.

Experienced Social Workers’ Perspectives on Aging: Applying the Theory of Gerotranscendence
by Kelly Kathleen Alfini

Research Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, MSW, PhD., LISW
Members: Sarah Anderson, MSW, LICSW; Rochelle Rottenberg, MSW, LISW

By 2050, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to be 88.5 million, which is more than double the population of 40.2 million in 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2008). In order to understand normal age changes compared to disordered processes, social workers must know classic as well as contemporary theories on aging (Richardson & Barush, 2008). Gerotranscendence offers a new framework for understanding the developmental shift into old age. The aim of this study was to explore the aging process from the perspective of experienced social workers who were 65 years and older. Understanding how social workers viewed aspects of aging such as those that capture their views of the world, themselves, and their interpersonal relationships suggested areas of congruence between theories about the aging process and basic social work principles. This study anonymously surveyed 45 active and 62 emeritus licensed independent clinical social workers (LICSW) over the age of 65. The survey used the Gerotranscendence scale created by Lars Tornstam and examined if social workers over 65 identified with the dimensions of Gerotranscendence. The overall findings supported the value of the theory of Gerotranscendence. The theory should be appreciated as a theory in aging for clinical social work practice because it can help with understanding a clinical perspective of older adults as well as possible transitions of LICSW’s as well.
Yoga’s Impact on Participants’ Depression, Anxiety and Perceived Quality of Life
by Lindsay N. Anderson

Research Chair: Kendra Garrett, Ph.D
Committee Members: Kate McGown, Ed. D., E-RYT; Katie Ueland, LSW

Stress and the debilitating impact it can play on individuals’ and communities’ health and wellbeing can be both observed and experienced by nearly all living beings. Yoga is an ancient practice that has been practiced by many as a means to improve physical strength and endurance while simultaneously moving into a meditative state. The purpose of this project was to explore the impact of a habitual yoga practice on participants’ levels of depression, anxiety and perceived quality of life. Using a quantitative design, 23 participants enrolled in the yoga program courses offered at St. Paul College, were surveyed and asked to respond to a variety of questions on three inventory scales measuring depression, anxiety and quality of life. The participants were surveyed both at the beginning of the yoga course and again five weeks later to calculate for changes in participant scores of depression, anxiety and perceived quality of life after beginning a regular yoga practice. The findings indicated that on average all participants experienced a decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety and an increase in perceived quality of life during the time of involvement in the yoga program. In addition, this study found that men experienced a greater decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety during the yoga program than did woman and woman experienced a greater increase in perceived quality of life. Finally, it was found that participants in the 18-21 year old age bracket experienced the greatest increase perceived quality of life of the four age brackets and the participants’ ages 40+ experienced the greatest decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety during the yoga program. These findings suggest that a yoga practice may be a successful intervention for social workers to use with clients who experience depression and/ or anxiety. Moreover, yoga may be a useful activity for social workers to engage in with clients as a means of expanding both client and clinician awareness and building rapport.

Challenges Presented to Case Managers when Working with
Individuals with Personality Disorders
by Molly M. Anderson

Research Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Sally Sales, MA, CPRP; Meghan Henderson, LICSW

This research was a descriptive, quantitative analysis which asked case managers to identify the most challenging aspects of their work with people who have a personality disorder diagnosis. A non-probability purposive sampling, including 27 Rule 79 case managers employed by four mental health agencies in Hennepin County, Minnesota, was used. This study hypothesized that case managers would identify a personality disorder diagnosis as the most challenging aspect of providing case management functions for a client with such a diagnosis. A 12-question survey, accessible through Survey Monkey, was disbursed via email to the participant’s supervisors. The supervisors
forwarded this email and survey to the participants. The survey included questions about case manager demographics and questions regarding an included vignette of a woman who had a diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. This research found that housing, accounted for by n=16 (67%) of 27 respondents, was more of a challenge for case managers when working with the vignette individual rather than the hypothesized Borderline Personality Disorder diagnosis. More case managers without licensure and less practice experience were associated with the housing response as most difficult. Respondents stated that poor motivation/readiness to change, n=15 (58%), and passive aggressive tendencies, n=6 (23%), were the most challenging symptoms of the client presented in the vignette. Both younger and less experienced case managers were found to have survey responses associated with finding that Judy’s perception of services challenged those most when trying to maintain an effective relationship. Older and more experienced case managers thought that Judy’s needs/skills were challenging when developing a therapeutic relationship. Future research should focus on how case managers perceive their ability to work with individuals about housing concerns and whether the housing concerns were associated with the client’s personality disorder diagnosis.

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**Beyond Attachment Theory:**

*Emotional Health of Children with Severe Attachment Disorders*

by Lindsey Andrist

Research Chair: Colin Hollidge MSW, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Deborah Goulet, MSW, LICSW; James Knowland

Attachment theory has been embraced by practitioners endeavoring to assist foster and adopted children and their parents. Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is the result of developmental interruptions that often relate to abuse and neglect, it usually occurs within the first three years of a child's life. The child's ability to bond and trust (attach) to other people, and attaching to primary caregivers is damaged. Many adoptive families deal with attachment and bonding issues. The purpose of this research is to discover what experiences clinicians identify as improving emotional health of children with severe attachment disorders. This study was done as a qualitative exploratory research study. Two subjects participated in this study who works with children with attachment disorders. The researcher found that children with attachment disorders have been showing improvements through therapy, although improvements really depend on the child’s symptoms and behaviors. Earned secure attachment is true at any level but challenging and complicated. It looks different for each individual due to their history and environmental conditions. The earlier the intervention begins the better chances are for success in that individual.
The Effect of Long-term Residential Placement on Family Caregivers
by Carol Ashwood

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D., MSW
Committee Members: Heidi Haley-Franklin, MSW, LICSW; Patty Crawford

There is a growing body of literature focused on the effect of long-term residential placement on family caregivers; findings from these studies showed that caregivers experienced grief, guilt, depression, stress, and role change following placement. The current study utilized qualitative methods to explore the effect of long-term care placement on family caregivers. Data was gathered from nine semi-standardized interviews with family caregivers who had placed a relative into a long-term care facility within one year of being interviewed. Grounded research methods were used; various levels of data were analyzed including codes, categories, themes, and relationship between themes.

Six dominant themes were found in the data: grief and loss, guilt, stress, relief, role change, and caregiver support. While the themes found in the current study were similar to findings in the literature reviewed, there were differences. Primarily, findings from the present study focused more on grief and loss, specifically, ambiguous grief and loss of companionship. In addition, the positive aspects of placement were highlighted by participants in the current study (relief and role change); positive responses to placement were less emphasized in the literature reviewed for this project. The growing numbers of older adults transitioning into long-term care settings indicate a need for continued research to educate professionals as they practice in this area. Professionals, such as social workers, need to be aware of the possible reactions that family caregivers might experience after a relative is placed. Increased awareness will enhance the quality of life for both family caregivers and their relatives who are admitted into long-term care facilities.

Effects of Unresolved Grief and Loss Issues on Recovery from Alcohol and Drug Addiction
by Rachel N. Aug

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D., LICSW, LMFT
Committee Members: Ted Bowman, MDiv; Jim Stolz, LICSW

The purpose of this study was to provide data on the role of unresolved grief and loss issues in long-term recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction. The extent to which grief reactions to addiction- and recovery-related losses affects an individual’s sobriety was examined as well as whether grief work is currently being incorporated into addiction treatment facilities and if not, if it should be integrated. Using the Beechem Unresolved Loss-Grief Addiction Inventory, the Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist (HGRC) and four items from the Adolescent Obsessive-Compulsive Drinking Scale, a quantitative survey was composed and distributed to 18 sober house residences in the Minneapolis and St. Paul communities. None of the hypotheses proposed in this study were supported by the data gathered using the survey. However, it was determined that the majority of
the sample population had high ratings indicating high grief levels. This determination indicates that despite the lack of statistical support, it is still imperative that the role of unresolved grief in long-term recovery continues to be explored by professionals and researchers, and a grief component be integrated into the treatment of alcohol and drug addiction.

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**Barriers to Implementation of Character Education in the Academic Setting**

by C. Jean Bates

Research Chair: Dr. Karen Carlson  
Members: Jaime Toenies Semling and Teresa Szymanski

The research focused on what barriers are present when implementing a successful character education program in the academic setting. The researcher looked at the barriers that were present in schools that already have a character education program in place and looked at schools that do not have a character education program in place. The researcher was interested in how much time is being spent teaching character education, what programs were being used, and how important the respondents believed character education is in the academic setting. The researcher used a 10 question online survey to collect responses from the Minnesota School Social Workers Association and Central Minnesota School Counselors Association’s members. Results found time, state standard requirements outweighing benefits, administrative support, and lack of training were the top four reasons why a character education program was not being implemented at these schools. It was also found in schools that do have a character education program in place responded with time, teacher buy-in, and meeting state testing as their main barriers. Overall, respondents wanted to see a significant time increase in character education being taught in their classrooms. It was found that more money, time, less stress on meeting state standards, and education would contribute to more character education being taught in the classrooms.

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**Child Protection Reports and Maintaining the Therapeutic Relationship: Social Work Perspectives**

by Martha Bather

Research Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D., LICSW  
Committee Members: Diane Bauer, MSW, LICSW; Laura Lundberg, MSW, LICSW

When social workers take on the role of professional, they also assume the task of being a mandatory reporter. A mandatory reporter is a professional identified by law who must make a report to the police or Child Protective Services (“CPS”) if they believe a child has been neglected, abused or maltreated. This dual role can be a difficult responsibility for social workers who work hard to gain their clients trust only to have that trust put through the trial of a CPS report. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (“LICSWs”) who have made CPS reports about their clients. Using a qualitative design, eight LICSWs were interviewed regarding their experiences with reporting clients to CPS and methods they utilized to maintain the therapeutic
relationship after the report. The responses from the interviews were coded, and the codes were synthesized into recurring themes. The data collected from the interview responses revealed four main themes: clinician feelings, effects of reports, maintaining the therapeutic relationship, and communication.

The first theme, clinician feelings, was reported by all eight respondents in the study. Respondents stated feeling anxious around explaining CPS reports to clients, and two respondents reported having feelings of hope. The second theme, effects of reports, was noted in the interview responses of each respondent. While half of the respondents believed that notifying clients about CPS reports usually harmed the trust in the therapeutic relationship, the other half of the respondents said that reports strengthened the therapeutic relationship. The third theme, maintaining the therapeutic relationship, was discussed by each respondent in the study. Respondents noted that acting as an advocate for the client, reframing the report, and being transparent with the client were ways they attempted to maintain the therapeutic relationship after a CPS report. Communication is the final theme found in the study responses. Each respondent in the study emphasized the importance of open, honest and direct communication with clients as well as the development of the skills necessary to repair the therapeutic relationship with clients after a CPS report.

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_School Administrators Perception of LGBT Student Needs and Barriers to Providing Support_

by Elyse Ann Bendel

Research Chair: Kendra Garrett, MSW, Ph.D., LICSW

Committee Members: Ross Aalgaard, M.Div., MSW, LGSW; Shelley Theisen, LICSW

This study focuses on the perception of school administrators on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth in schools, to examine the sources of conflict encountered when supporting LGBT students and to identify areas for needed change to improve the lives of LGBT youth in and out of schools. Eight school administrators participated from schools around the Twin Cities, three participants were middle school principals and five were high school principals. Several common themes emerged in the interviews, including (1) principals perception of the problem in schools, (2) areas for change and improvement, (3) sources of conflict and resistance, (4) administrator’s commitment to LGBT students and (5) the development of inclusive school environment. The findings suggest that school administrators perceive the problem LGBT youth face in the school as a systemic issue, with several areas for change within school practices, policies and procedures. School principals indicated that community make-up and values as well as parent ideals serve as sources of conflict when principals support and advocate for LGBT youth. It was also noted that school administrators demonstrated high levels of commitment to LGBT youth through their active efforts in their schools, districts and communities to advocate for their needs. The findings from this study suggest that school administrators are increasingly in tough positions, needing to provide supportive and safe learning environments for all students, while at the same time addressing specific needs of certain groups of student, LGBT youth especially.
Mindfulness in Clinical Social Work Practice with Parent-Child Relationships
by Grace Bennett

Research Chair: Karen Carlson, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Casey Ladd, LICSW, LMFT; Ellie Schoenfeld, LICSW

The use of Eastern philosophies such as mindfulness as an adjunct to traditional Western psychotherapy for families is a fairly new concept. The purpose of this project was to explore the perceptions and experiences of mental health professionals on the use of mindfulness interventions with parent-child relationships. Using a qualitative design, eight mental health professionals holding an LICSW, LP or LMFT licensure were interviewed about their perceptions and experiences of the family issues that could benefit from mindfulness, the theories and philosophies that guide their use of mindfulness interventions with families, specific mindfulness techniques used with families, the effects of mindfulness with families and limitations and barriers to providing quality mindfulness interventions with families. Data were analyzed using inductive, grounded theory methods, in which categories were first developed from the interview responses and then were linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated that family therapy is one mode in which mindfulness-based interventions may be applied to parents and children to heal stressful relationships. In addition, this study validates the importance for clinicians to have an in-depth and well developed personal practice of mindfulness in their lives before providing and practicing these interventions on families. These findings emphasize that while providing mindfulness interventions to parents and children both separately and together in session is continuing to show positive benefits, there is still limited research relating the effectiveness of utilizing mindfulness interventions with whole families in therapy. Thus continued research is needed to empirically validate the findings of this and earlier studies.

Safety in the Workplace: Social Workers’ Perspectives
by Erica R. Berger

Research Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, MSSW, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW; Denise Morcomb, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of this study was to identify social workers’ experiences with safety issues related to the client/worker relationship. Sixty-two social work professionals state-wide participated in the survey; providing a near even split in LSW (n=29) and LGSW (n=33) comparison groups. From previous literature, three categories of threat were identified: Verbal Threats, Physical Threats, and Property Damage/Theft. This study identified occurrence of each category, whether or not the incident was reported, agency/supervisory responses to the incident, and emotional responses of the worker following the incident. Similar to previous research, this study found that of the identified categories,
Verbal Threats occurred most frequently. Additionally, in majority of the cases, workers reported the incident to their supervisor/agency. However, of the implemented services responding to violent incidences, just under half of the respondents felt that the services were adequate. Existing methods of addressing violent incidences within the workplace should be re-examined in order to better understand a possible shift in reporting trends. Additionally, more emphasis should be placed on supervision, teamwork, and a safe environment within agencies.

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**School Social Workers’ Attitudes Towards Inclusion/Mainstreaming of Children with Special Needs**

by Carly M. Binford

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Joel Hansen, MSW, LGSW; Barbra Wissink, PhD

Prior to the 1975, almost 4 million children with disabilities were denied meaningful participation in public education (New America Foundation, 1996). In a federal study, it found that half of those children were denied access to public schools, while the rest were placed in segregated classrooms or in regular classrooms with no extra help for their disability. Brown v. Board of education was the first legislation in the United States that made providing education to children with special needs a state and local obligation. This issue still is prevalent in the United States today where 56% of children with disabilities spend less than 21% of their regular school day outside of the regular education classroom. 22.4% of students with disabilities spend 21-60% of their time outside of the regular education classroom and 15.4% spend more than 60% of their time outside the regular education classroom (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2007). This study explores the attitudes of school social workers towards the mainstreaming/inclusion of children with special needs through an online survey. Findings indicate that a majority (73%) of school social workers believe that there should be more integration of special education services in the regular education classroom for children with special needs. This was consistent with the literature review, which found that if teachers had help modifying their work with children with disabilities, teachers would be more likely to do so. This study also found that a majority (100%) of participant’s felt that benefit children with special needs would receive by being in the regular education setting is peer acceptance. This was consistent with the literature, which stated that regular education peers were more likely to socially accept children with special needs if they were included/mainstreamed in regular education classrooms. Efforts to advocate and continue to ensure these services are implemented for children with special needs are needed. School social workers’ must continue to work on advocating for these needs and the support for children with special needs.
Group Therapy and Schizophrenia
by Melissa Booth

Research Chair: Dr. Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Katie Shaughnessy, LGSW; Melissa David, LGSW

The purpose of this study was to explore the curative factors and the challenges of working with individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia in a group therapy setting. This project utilized a qualitative research design interviewing three licensed mental health professionals regarding the symptoms of schizophrenia, group therapy styles/formats, and the possible benefits and challenges in working with this population in a group setting. Data was analyzed using grounded theory and a comparison method was used to search for similarities and differences between collected data, as well as related literature. The findings detail the benefits of group therapy to individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia, the negative effects on the clients and challenging behaviors that may arise in group sessions. These findings illustrate a need for increased research in therapies geared toward individuals with schizophrenia, in order to enhance their levels of functioning and lifestyles.

The Perceptions of Older Adults about Advance Care Planning
by Elizabeth J. Bouman

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D., MSW
Committee Members: Mary Schroeder, RN, MA; Carla Sutter, MSW, LISW

This qualitative research design explored perceptions of older adults about identifying and communicating beliefs for advance medical decision-making. Two focus groups were held in senior living buildings with 17 participants. Seven themes illustrated the attitudes of older adults about planning for future changes in health. (1) Participants demonstrated variable perceptions on the effectiveness of traditional advance directive documents, but still viewed them as an important process to complete them. (2) Participants expressed views about the values and goals that affected their perceptions about living well as older adults. (3) Past experiences with illness were associated by participants as motivational factors in planning for future health needs. (4) Participants had strong views about aggressive medical treatment and normalizing the eventual reality of dying. (5) Participants assume family members will be effective surrogate decision-makers on their behalf. (6) Participants have a preference for planning for future health care needs in their own homes. (7) Participants see value in having staged discussions throughout the continuum of their lives that plan for advanced illness. Findings suggest that identification of values and beliefs about living well, communication of wishes, and involvement of surrogates are all factors for promoting customized advance care planning interventions with older adults.
Impact of Working Mothers’ Role Conflict on the Mother-Infant Relationship
by Jennifer S. Bradley

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Carol Bruess, Ph.D.; Jessica Mathwig-Olson

This qualitative study explored the potential role conflict mothers experience between their role as a worker and their role as a mother and how this conflict impacted their relationship with their child. The semi standardized qualitative questionnaire consisted of 15 questions developed based on previous research. This on-line survey was completed by 17 working mothers, ages 18 to 43 years old. The data was analyzed using grounded theory methods, and informed by attachment theory and role theory. Two primary themes emerged from this study: support at home and at work and control of aspects at home and at work. Both themes were shown to be important indicators of the amount of role conflict experienced by the women. The women’s ability to be emotionally available and sensitive to their children’s needs were impacted by the amount of control women had over their lives and the amount of support they received from others in each of their roles. The findings support previous research regarding the importance of support and control at home and at work in mediating the possible negative impact of being both a worker and a mother. Future policies can be informed by the growing body of knowledge showing the importance of supporting women to have support and control in both their role as a mother and their role as a worker.

The Relationship Between a Woman and Her Horse:
How This Information Can Assist Clinical Social Workers
by Jessica Bruyere

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, PhD, MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Susan Seiler, MSW, LICSW, ACSW; Kathryn Langdon, MSW, LGSW

Women have a relationship with their horses that is empowering to them and could be useful in the realm of clinical social work. The purpose of this project was to explore these relationships in the voice of the women in order to highlight the informal support this relationship provides. From the theoretical lens of ecofeminism, it is important to hear the voices of women telling of their relationships with their horses both because of the importance of women’s voices and because of the perspective that humans should no longer be considered superior to animals. Using a qualitative design, the findings of healing and personal growth emerged. The women in the study discussed feeling the healing effects of safety and comfort from their relationships, as well as cultivating the qualities of dedication and protectiveness. The women felt their relationships with their horses made them stronger and healthier.
Mental Health and Recovery: Supports and Barriers
From the Individuals Perspective
by Shannon L. Brewers

Research Chair: Al Holloway, Ph.D, MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Linda Nelson MS, LP; Jennifer Gregoire, MSW, LICSW

Millions of Americans struggle with severe mental illness. According to the National Institute for Mental Health (2009) every 1 in 4 or 57.7 million American adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness. A review of literature indicates that over the years there have been several changes in the approach to treating those with mental illness. The most recent shift in treatment of those with mental illness is that of recovery. Recovery is often considered a unique process for every individual. This research aims to find out what individuals suffering from mental illness identify as the supports and barriers to their recovery. Qualitative interviews were completed with six individuals in self proclaimed recovery. The data was analyzed and coded using inductive grounded theory method. Themes were then recorded. The literature identifies the supports to recovery as hope, finding meaning in life, social supports, work, medications, and spirituality. This research supports those finding with participants identifying hope, social supports, spirituality, work, and service providers as supports to recovery. The literature identifies the barriers to recovery as stigma, substance abuse, social inclusion, and poverty/finance. The research only identified one similar finding and that was stigma. The other barriers identified in this research were family/professionals, location, and lack of services. All of these things have aided in the recovery of individuals with mental illness. However, further research needs to be continued involving those who suffer mental illness to gain their perspective on recovery.

Challenges of Military Service Members: Reflections of Social Service and Mental Health Professionals
by Venus L. Burney

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, PhD.
Committee Members: Joe Fredrickson, MSW, LGSW; Michael Oien, MA

With the increased demand for additional troops needed for war-time deployments, mental health and social service providers are also in demand. To better understand current methods of practice in providing therapeutic treatment strategies in addressing mental illness, family concerns, and strengthening resiliency. The importance of family resiliency is supported and continually reflected and emphasized as it related to the issues surround reintegration for returning service members. Using the Biopsychosocial Model, this qualitative study comprised of interviews with licensed Mental Health and Case Management providers involved with providing direct care to military service members and families for at least 3 years. Results of the study reveal that there is a need for additional mental health and social service professionals serving military service members in Minnesota in the areas of financial counseling, couples and family therapy as well as individual therapy. Results in the forms of therapy most often used by mental health professionals in this study
are: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Narrative Therapy, Hardiness Resilience Therapy, and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. This study found that the Veteran Affairs Medical Center is a great resource for many service members; however, the study also illustrated a strong need for other affiliate agencies that focus on providing services to military families as a whole as well as providing on-going training to clinicians in this field of work. This research is important for social work practice as the need for successful treatment modalities increase. Results support the need for solution-focused therapy where Resiliency, Adaptability, and Flexibility are key factors for a successful reintegration for both service members and their families.

Independence and Self-Determination from the Perspective of Adults with a Disability
by Patricia A. Burrows

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, MSA, MA, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Stephanie Spandl, MSW, LICSW; Karen Webb, MSW; Cindy Guddal, MSW LISW

This research project is a qualitative research study to explore self-determination and independence from the perspective of persons living with a physical disability. Are they at risk of a greater level of dependence in their living environment or social situations? How can advocates of the disability community assist in creating or supporting a person with physical disabilities to live as independently as possible? For the purposes of this study, 11 participants were selected from people who access services through the Courage Center, a non-profit rehabilitation agency in Minnesota that provides services to persons living with a physical disability. Individuals living with a physical disability need and want to be able to make their own decisions (Benson, et al., 2008). The literature supports the idea that when you provide people with opportunities to make their own decisions, it can serve to empower them now and into the future (Wehmeyer, M., 2004). Persons with physical disabilities need and want the same things that able bodied persons often take for granted, i.e., access to affordable housing, education and employment (Vorhaus, 2007). However, their needs, in many cases, are not met through ordinary means. While it may not be realistic or feasible to live in a barrier free world, environmental factors associated with accessibility can be prohibitive to obtaining or succeeding in basic aspects of social and economic life.

The Role of Spirituality in Recovery from Addiction for Lesbians
by Mary N. Bye

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, MSW, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Carey Winkler, MSW, LICSW; Mireille Bardy, MSW, LICSW

In narratives of 10 lesbians, the role of spirituality was significant for their recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs (AODs). This qualitative study presents what supported them, both
interpersonally and intrapersonally, in their recovery from addiction. The participants' weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and their ability to believe in something outside of them however they defined it, was the foundation of their spiritual program of recovery. Research is lacking on the impact of the development of spirituality for sexual minority persons' who have experienced social and religious heterosexism. It is critically important to establish spiritually inclusive/culture competent and holistic programs, separate from religious context, to provide interventions and treatment that will support persons addicted to AODs. It is also recommended that social workers have knowledge of lesbians’ unique experiences and needs in both their addiction to, and recovery from, AODs.

**Hope, Social Work and Older Adults: An Arts-Informed, Arts-Based Research Project**

by Debra Caravitis

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Mary Mengel, M.A., MSW; Ted Bowman, M.Div

Hope is a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept that has been variously defined across disciplines. Hope is important in maintaining quality of life for older adults. Since researchers advocate innovative ways of studying hope, the purposes of this study were to 1) deepen the experience of hope for social workers, 2) describe the experience of hope in older adults, and 3) describe the experience of social workers' hope in their work with elders. An arts-informed, arts-based research method was chosen to accomplish these purposes, and a series of 3 collages was created. Use of field notes and reflective memos documented the research process as well as the creative process. An instrument was developed to assist social workers in becoming more aware of an orientation of hope. Evaluative feedback from social workers and other professionals highlighted the paradoxical nature of hope amidst pain, and affirmed the importance of relationships and story. Implications for social work practice include the use of collage with clients, students and practitioners.

**The Functions of Supervision and its Impact on Social Worker Burnout**

by Amy Carey

Research Chair: Annette Semachin Jones, PhD Candidate
Committee Members: John Collins, PhD; Sarah Stelzner, MSW, LICSW

This study explores social workers' perspectives about how the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision impact burnout among social workers. The study sample consisted of eight social work practitioners selected from the population of licensed master’s level social workers in Rochester, Minnesota. The data was collected for this study using semi-structured
The interviews were assessed using analytic induction, a qualitative research method. Findings from this study support previous research that identified supportive supervision as a protective factor against burnout among social workers. The current study adds to previous research by finding that the educational and administrative functions of supervision also impact social worker burnout.

The Impact of Men’s Therapy Groups on Men’s Relationships
by Dan Christensen-Cowan

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D.
Committee Members: David Gibson, MSW; Mark Olson, MSW

This research project explored the effect men’s therapy groups have on the quality of men’s relationships. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through surveys, which were distributed to men’s therapy groups at three agencies and one private practice in the Twin Cities. The survey questions explored the nature of men’s relationships both inside and outside the therapy group. Questions focused on changes men have noticed with their spouses, children, families, and friends. Particular attention was paid to gender role socialization and how this may have impacted the men’s relationships. A total of nine surveys were returned and analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches. The findings indicated that the men’s therapy groups helped increase self-acceptance and helped men discover the sources of their anger, depression, and other painful emotions. The data also suggest that the men’s therapy groups helped men navigate conflict and see the growth that can come from conflict and expressing one’s needs in direct ways. The data from this study support other studies that have found that men’s therapy groups facilitate an egalitarian atmosphere and increase the likelihood that men will reach out to give or receive support from others, especially other men. Although the researcher attempted to explore the role of early gender role socialization through the surveys, not enough information was found to draw conclusions about its impact on participants. In addition, because of the fact that all of the participants in this study were members of voluntary open-ended groups, the study does not speak to the efficacy of men’s groups for other client populations. Nonetheless, these findings indicate that men’s therapy groups may be a powerful intervention for improving men’s relationships. They also underscore the need for future research with a larger and more diverse sample.

Spirituality, Resiliency, and Hurricane Katrina
by Alia M. Clemen

Research Chair: Kendra Garrett, PhD.
Committee Members: Theresa McPartlin LICSW; Laura Palke

This research examined how religion/spirituality strengthens the resiliency of people who have experienced Hurricane Katrina. Qualitative semi-standardized interviewers were conducted with
six individuals who have survived Hurricane Katrina who live in the Atlanta, GA metro area. The participants were asked four open ended questions related to their experience of Hurricane Katrina. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis and interpretation using grounded coding and open coping. All but one of the respondents indicated that their religious beliefs did not change as a result of Hurricane Katrina and four of the six respondents said they relied on their previous spiritual/religious beliefs to help them cope through Hurricane Katrina. However, the individuals interviewed mainly discussed gratitude for lives spared and the belief that all would be well, not relying on their previous religious/spiritual beliefs to cope. Therefore, while there was a connection there was not evidence that the individuals used their previous religious/spiritual beliefs as a source of strength. Implications for further research would include a larger sample size, negative religious coping, clarity of questions, and more diverse population.

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** Clinicians’ Perceptions of Ambiguous Loss in Families of Veterans **
by Kathryn M. Conery

Research Committee: Cara Carlson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Kathleen Martin, MSW, LICSW; Diane E. Bauer, MSW, LICSW

Ambiguous Loss as conceptualized by Dr. Pauline Boss is organized into two types; the first with a physical absence and a psychological presence, and the second with a physical presence, and a psychological absence. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore clinician’s perceptions of the second type of ambiguous loss in families of veterans. Eight clinicians who work with such families participated. The data was recorded, transcribed and coded into four major themes: the unique challenges of the current war and effects on families; behavioral, communication, and relational issues; family stress; and resilience. The findings indicated ambiguous loss is present in families of veterans. The findings also indicate unique challenges faced by National Guard and Reservist members and their families.

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** International adoption: Birth country culture, adult adjustment, & interpersonal relationships **
by Meaghan M. Coneys

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Stacy Coleman-Symons, Ph.D., LP; Heidi Wiste, MSW, LICSW

International adoptees may face difficulties while growing up and as adults due to their removal from their birth country and placement in a new culture. Birth country culture involvement has been shown to affect ethnic identity, which in turn may positively affect adult adjustment (Jaret & Reitzes, 2009; Malott et al., 2010; Song & Lee, 2009; Street et al., 2008; Umana-Taylor et al., 2009;
Whitehead et al., 2009). Due to the lack of research on international adult adoptee perspectives of birth country culture, the following study explored said perspectives. International adult adoptees were asked about their involvement in their birth country culture throughout childhood, adult adjustment, and ability to form platonic and sexual interpersonal relationships. A quantitative online survey was administered through international adoption online chat rooms. There were a total of 14 respondents with descriptive statistics run on the resulting data. This exploratory study suggested an overall lack of birth country culture involvement throughout childhood with slight involvement in certain areas, positive adult adjustment, and positive ability to form platonic relationships, with some difficulty in sexual relationships. Future implications suggest a need for post-adoption requirements for birth country culture involvement both for adoptive parent (s) and adopted persons.

Harm Reduction:

How do chemical dependency professionals view this treatment modality?
by Connie L Edgar

Research Chair: Kendra Garrett, PH.D.
Members: Colleen Solberg, MSW; Kate Lutgen, LSW

The social science literature on the harm reduction model highlights the history of the harm reduction model as it has grown in strength in other countries. Though this treatment modality has not generally been entertained in this country, there seems to be an increasing recognition for alternate treatment strategies for individuals who fail to remain abstinent using the principles of the 12-step program, so this research surveys chemical dependency professionals in Minnesota to gain an understanding of their views on the harm reduction model.

Using a probability sample, questionnaires were mailed to 200 Licensed Addiction Counselors, (LADC) who were chosen randomly, this study reveals the responses of chemical dependency professionals in the state of Minnesota surrounding the issue of harm reduction as it pertains to abstinence vs. harm reduction, harm reduction as a cost-cutting strategy and permissible strategies as viewed by professionals. Results of the study reveal that the professionals in Minnesota do not solely favor abstinence-only modalities of treatment and that the majority of respondents favor some forms of harm reduction. And though, approximately half of the respondents do believe that harm reduction is a cost cutting strategy, there seems to be a consensus that the majority of professionals believe it is important to “meet the client where he or she is.”

This research is important for social work practice as the need for successful treatment modalities increase. Results support the need for supplemental abstinence-only approaches which are much more consistent with social work values of client-centeredness and self-determination than is the current predominant zero-tolerance approach.
Yoga as an Adjunct to Psychotherapy
by Michelle Cosgrove

In the last several decades yoga has experienced increased popularity in the United States. As the use of yoga has grown it has been utilized as an alternative method of care for physical and mental health. Mental health professionals have a critical role in utilizing holistic methods of care with their clients. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore clinicians’ perspective of yoga as an adjunct to psychotherapy.

Eight mental health professionals were identified through convenience and snowball sampling. Each participant was interviewed individually and six themes emerged from the analysis of the research:

- the importance of client readiness for yoga,
- yoga assists with the integration of the mind and body,
- aspects of yoga utilized in the therapeutic relationship,
- positive impact on symptoms of mental illness,
- yoga assisting in personal and professional development of the clinician, and
- misconceptions and limitations of using yoga as an adjunct to psychotherapy.

This research study identified that aspects of yoga (such as breath work and mindfulness) used by mental health practitioners in the therapeutic process was helpful to healing for clients and beneficial as an adjunct to psychotherapy. Additionally, clinical social workers have the opportunity to influence the use of yoga with their clients.

Clinicians’ Views on DBT with BPD and SUD
by James M. Cox

Borderline Personality Disorder is the most common personality disorder diagnosis used in modern clinical practice. The purpose of this project was to explore clinicians’ thoughts on how effective Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was when treating individuals diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and co-morbid Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Using a qualitative design, six clinicians, who treat this population and use DBT in practice, were interviewed regarding their thoughts on the efficacy of DBT with their clients. Data was analyzed via coding for themes, which correlated with current literature. The findings indicated that most of the clinicians thought DBT was the most effective treatment for BPD and co-occurring SUD. In contrast, personal views on how adherent one should be to the DBT model differed. These findings illustrate a general preference for DBT for these co-occurring diagnoses, but also point to the need for continued efforts to develop effective treatments for this population depending on the severity of symptoms and substance use.
Viewpoints of Mental Health Practitioners on the Benefits of Animal-Assisted Therapy
by Emily E. Deye

Research Chair: Kendra J. Garrett, PhD
Committee Members: Theresa L. Bozic, MSW, LICSW; Lynn R. Deye, MSW, LSW

This study was conducted to determine: In what ways do mental health professionals believe Animal-Assisted Therapy can be beneficial for people suffering with mental health diagnoses? The method used was Qualitative interviews with seven respondents. Initially, this study discusses the concept of the benefits of AAT such as mood elevation, relaxation and communication. The study next looks at some of the drawbacks/challenges of AAT such as having a relationship with the animal and making sure that an appropriate client/animal match is made before using AAT. Ethical considerations for AAT were also discussed, taking into account time, cost, training of the animal and certification of the practitioner. Finally, the aspects of AAT that make it work as a therapeutic intervention were addressed, specifically looking at areas such as animals being non-judgmental creatures and the concept of attunement. Several conclusions can be drawn using analysis of a number of studies and information from the Qualitative interviews. Since many clients do not respond to traditional forms of therapy, using AAT allows the clients a new way to experience emotional, physical and psychological healing.

Providers’ Perceptions of Abuse History as a Predictive Factor of Teenage Motherhood
by Stephanie L. Dibb

Research Chair: Valandra, MBA, MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Michele Fallon, LICSW, IMHE (IV); Sue Fust, MPH, PhD

This study assesses Minnesota service providers serving pregnant and parenting teens and the extent to which they address clients who have experienced abuse in their history as a means to pregnancy prevention and intervention. The hypothesis of the research is that there will be an identifiable gap between previous research suggesting that abuse is a significant predictor of teenage pregnancy and the kinds of services being provided to this population. An online survey collected data from 35 respondents who serve teenagers who are pregnant and/or parenting. Results suggest that respondents’ perspectives support the literature in regard to the efficacy of current pregnancy prevention strategies and the impact of a client’s history of abuse as a risk factor for early pregnancy. However, respondents’ perspectives also imply a lack of response to this factor, particularly in regard to social workers. Implications for social work suggest a need for more advocacy and support to be given to both pregnant/parenting teens as well as young women who have experienced childhood abuse.
A Retrospective Study on Adults of Color Who Aged Out of Foster Care: A Journey into Adulthood
by Christine M. Dumke & Alyssa M. Lovgren

Research Chair: Valandra, MSW, LISW, ABD
Committee Members: Tonya Beck, BA; Mary Weeks, LISW

Foster care is needed when a youth has been removed from their home due to abuse, neglect and/or other safety concerns. Although most youth are reunified with their primary caregiver, there are a number of youth who age out, get kicked out or leave foster care. When exiting out of foster care a youth typically has no permanent home. This qualitative research used a strengths-based lens to give a voice to former youth who are of color and have transitioned out of foster care. The purpose of this research is to gain insight into factors that influenced and supported their transition into adulthood. The researchers interviewed three participants. Findings suggest that relationship’s built with these youth is the primary supporting factor during their transition from foster care to adulthood. Secondary, is the professional’s investment in youth that they serve; professionals invest by being aware of resources for youth in foster care, allowing their practice to be youth focused, and by preparing youth for interdependent living rather than independent living. Furthermore, the findings indicate a need for a higher standard of care in the recruitment and retention of foster parents.

School Social Workers’ Perspectives on Bullying in Elementary Schools
by Megan E. Eastman

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, MSW, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Steve Banks, MSW, LICSW; Margaret Shoemaker, MSW, LICSW

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), in a crime and safety study conducted among school age students, 28% reported being a victim of bullying while at school. Of those 28%, 8% report that they are bullied almost every day (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). There are various types of bullying which include “direct” (i.e. physical or verbal attacks on an intended victim) or “indirect” (i.e. forms of social isolation and intentional exclusion). Bullies and their victims are at risk of developing short-term and long-term physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems (Bardick & Bernes, 2008). The purpose of this clinical research paper was to explore school social workers’ perspectives of bullying in elementary schools. An online survey of Minnesota school social workers was conducted. A total of 25 respondents participated in this study. The study found that 84% of school social workers report their school teaching social skills and problem solving skills as the top method for addressing bullying. Forty-eight percent of social workers wanted to implement training for staff and parents, 39% wanted an in-service day devoted to bullying awareness and education, 35% wanted groups for bullies and 30% wanted a confidential reporting system. Implications for social work practice indicate that school social workers should attend conferences and workshops regarding bullying and help to educate others on bullying. School social workers can
also use their knowledge to provide input on the development of bullying policies within their schools.

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**Effects of Eating Disorder Diagnoses on Family Systems**
by Barbara Eisenmenger & Kelly Hams

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD
Committee Members: Kathleen Bernhoft, LICSW; Linda Kuno, RN, MPH

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of eating disorder diagnoses on family systems. The main focus of this study emphasized participant’s experiences based on family member’s eating disorder diagnoses and the corresponding treatment processes. Issues described by participants (n = 4) included: mental health issues, struggles in intimate relationships and marriage, financial expenses, isolation, conflict, family therapy, and personal growth. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Participant interviews were conducted at an outpatient eating disorder treatment facility, audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim for themes. This study indicated several implications for social work practice, including the importance of including family members in eating disorder treatment processes and educating the general public about eating disorders. Implications for future research are also discussed, specifically pertaining to the effects eating disorder diagnoses have on family systems from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations.

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**Rural Elementary Teachers Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes about Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**
by Brian P. Ensign

Research Chair: Sarah M. Ferguson, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Susan Abrahamson, LICSW; Sheryl R. Gutzman, M.Ed

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most commonly diagnosed children’s disorder with rates shown as high as 8% or one in every classroom. Children with ADHD are at serious risk for underachieving, dropping out of school and developing corresponding mental illnesses such as depression and/or substance use/abuse. Teachers can play a major role in the prevention of such life altering problems for both children and parents. Teachers are one of the most significant resources for information with regard to referral and diagnosis of ADHD. Teachers are charged with creating a safe environment conducive to academic, social and emotional success for children with ADHD. Therefore, this study aims at assessing whether rural elementary teachers have the appropriate knowledge of ADHD. The study aims to assess the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of K-6 grade teachers in St. Louis County school district. A quantitative study using a survey was conducted. The measuring scale was the KADDS (Knowledge of Attention Deficit Disorder scale), which measured teachers’ knowledge and misperceptions in three subscale areas:
symptom and diagnosis of ADHD, general knowledge about the nature, causes and outcome of
ADHD and possible interventions and treatment in regard to children with ADHD. The data was
statistically analyzed. The results demonstrated that teachers’ general knowledge and treatment
subscales scored far lower then symptom/diagnosis subscales. The teachers overall knowledge scores
therefore were poor. The results of this study support previous research indicating that there is a
need for more formal training for teachers in the area of ADHD.

Vicarious Resilience: Its Impact on the Mental Health Professional
by Alyssa K. Evenson

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Serene Thornton, LICSW; Erin Morgan, LMFT

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of vicarious resilience. In particular, this study
investigated how mental health professionals are impacted by their client’s stories of resilience and
what factors contribute to the experience of vicarious resilience. This study used a qualitative
method through the means of audio recorded interviews. Nine mental health professionals from
Minnesota were asked to participate in this study all of whom were from a county social service
agency and an inpatient psychiatric hospital setting. All of the participants interviewed for this
study had a bachelor's degree or master’s degree with specific licensures including, LICSW, LMFT,
and LADC. The findings of this study indicated that mental health professionals are impacted in
various ways when they witness their clients overcome adversity through strength and resilience.
Five themes emerged relating to the impact vicarious resilience has on the mental health
professionals, including: personal experience influenced professional career, vicarious resilience:
professionals influenced by client resilience, strategies that counteract compassion fatigue and
burnout, characteristics of the strength perspective, and defense mechanisms. Findings of this study
suggest that vicarious resilience is a concept that can potentially counteract the fatiguing process.
The respondents provided insight that offers a deeper understanding of vicarious resilience and how
it personally and professionally impacts them. As mental health professionals bear witness to their
clients’ strength and resilience in overcoming adversity, they are impacted in a variety of ways.
Respondents suggested that their experience of witnessing their clients overcome adversity
influenced their personal and professional growth. In sum, vicarious resilience is a concept that does
impact a professional’s sense of self and the way they view the world. Vicarious resilience also
influences a professional’s meaning and purpose in life and enhances their spirituality. Vicarious
resilience recharges the professional's batteries, and offers the belief that recovery and healing is
possible.

Deathbed Phenomena: Social Workers’ Perspectives
by Irene Lavik Falksen

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, MSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Kathie Harrington, LICSW; Jean Haley, MSW
Deathbed Phenomena (DBP), Nearing Death Awareness, End-of-Life Experiences, and Near Death Experience are all terms used in literature to describe mystical or unexplainable experiences that often happen to the dying, their loved ones, or caregivers before, during or after their death. They may include but are not limited to: visions of deceased loved ones, angels, spiritual figures, knowledge of or control over the timing of their death, or events that seem like unlikely “coincidences”. At times the person having the experience may seem to others to be confused or having hallucinations when they are actually responding to DBPs. When these DBP experiences are misunderstood the responses may be harmful to the experiencers, or miss opportunities to help them to experience a peaceful and meaningful death or bereavement period. This research explored the experiences, perspectives, and responses of social workers and other mental health professionals who work with terminally ill, dying, or bereaved clients.

The researcher used a qualitative, exploratory approach to answer this question. A non-probability, purposive sample of social workers and other mental health practitioners who work with the terminally ill or bereaved were targeted. The researcher used the snowball method to identify and interview nine participants. The semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews consisted of a schedule of ten questions and a short questionnaire to obtain demographic information. Data were analyzed using an open coding method to identify themes. Most participants had worked in hospice, and indicated that DBPs were so common that they had come to believe they were unexplainable, but real. As they reflected on their practice they identified approaches that they believed were helpful for their patients. Key points included: talking openly and directly about death and dying, asking open ended questions that provided an opportunity for patients to discuss DBPs, and normalizing their DBP experiences or absence of DBP experiences. The opinion varied about whether it was helpful to have the respondent to offer interpretations about the meaning of the experience, or to encourage the patient or family to assign their own meaning. Further research and education on therapeutic responses to these phenomena is needed.

Men, Substance Abuse, and Trauma: A Program Evaluation
by David Farley

Research Chair: Katherine Hill, PhD
Committee Members: Jane Yank, PhD; David Smith, PhD

In 1999 Dr. Stephanie Covington, PhD LCSW created a trauma-informed, gender-responsive chemical dependency treatment curriculum for women entitled Helping Women Recover (HWR). In 2010 Covington worked with Dan Griffin, MA and Rick Dauer, LADC to created Helping Men Recover (HMR) to replicate the success of trauma-informed, gender-responsive treatment the lives of men. The current study explores the efficacy of HMR. The researcher employed the Trauma Symptom Checklist – 40 (TSC-40)(Briere and Runtz, 1990) to measure reports of trauma symptoms in outpatients (N=31) at a chemical dependency treatment center. Scores from an experimental group and a control group were compared to determine what effect HMR had on men’s tendency to report symptoms of trauma. Analysis of the data gathered in the study provides sufficient evidence to encourage further research. The researcher feels that an expanded study of HMR will yield proof
The promising findings appear to be important in ways not yet quantified or demonstrated by statistical significance.

The Biopsychosocial Effects of Cancer on Mothers Ages 20-35
by Cindy Finch

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, MSW, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Janis Miller, LICSW; Emma Barnhart

The purpose of this study was to explore the biological, psychological and sociological effects of cancer on young mothers ages 20-35 in order to understand exactly what these women face. Because of our limited understanding of how cancer affects the entire family system, it was important to gain valuable insights directly from young adult, female survivors. A purposive, non-probability sampling method was used via a survey posted on Facebook. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Results indicated that the women (N=11) endured multiple hardships including personal, social and relational difficulties which all seemed to overlap with each other. However, the families themselves, though highly stressed, were also perceived by the women to be highly helpful and a direct source of strength and resilience. Even under great duress most of the women retained a sense of hope in the midst of their difficulties. Implications for social work included a need for heightened awareness of young female patient’s vulnerabilities to multiple-stressors and a need for increased services to this population.

Social Workers’ Perceptions on Providing Quality of Care to People Living with Alzheimer’s Disease
by Mari Folwick

Research Chair: Valandra, MSW, LISW, ABD
Committee Members: Sandy Parnell, MSW, LICSW; Shelly Rottenberg, MSW, LISW

Every 70 seconds someone in America develops Alzheimer’s disease. Given that the baby boomers are now approaching the 65 and older population, by the year 2029 there will be approximately 70 million people ages 65 and older. With the trend in aging, it indicates that social workers will have higher numbers of people with Alzheimer’s on their case loads. The purpose of this project was to address social workers’ perceptions on how the quality of care affects people with Alzheimer’s disease in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Using a qualitative research design, six social workers who are employed in nursing homes and assisted living facilities were surveyed regarding their perceptions on the quality of care provided to people living with Alzheimer’s in their facility. Data was analyzed using open coding to uncover concepts that were linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated three main factors that affect the quality of care of people living with Alzheimer’s in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The three main factors included regulations, family support and the nature of the disease. Regulations included; increased paperwork...
that participant’s state affects quality of care as it reduced one on one contact with residents. Family support is needed to ensure the resident’s needs are being met as someone with Alzheimer’s may not be able to convey their needs. The nature of the disease affects the quality of care for people with Alzheimer’s as the disease can cause many behaviors that make it hard for staff to care for these people. The data also suggested that training is essential to ensure staff understanding or comprehension of the disease and how to provide care to persons living with Alzheimer’s. These findings suggest factors that contribute to the quality of care for people living with Alzheimer’s and help identify what is needed for social workers in nursing homes and assisted living facilities to ensure quality of care.

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**Boys and Depression:**

*What are the symptoms of depression in boys aged 5-12 years old?*

by Nathan Foote

Research Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Monica Seidel, MSW, LICSW; Chris Heise, MSW, LICSW

Qualitative data was gained to determine how boys aged 5-12 are experiencing and displaying the symptoms of depression. The procedural method utilized exploratory interviews of nine licensed mental health therapists of various professional backgrounds. The participants perform diagnostic assessments of children and were selected due to their knowledge within subject area. Aggression, low energy, and irritability were the symptoms listed the most often as diagnostically relevant when assessing depression in boys. The participants reported that there is a common misinterpretation of the symptoms agitation and lack of focus, which could be caused by anxiety or depression, but are more often labeled as ADHD. The diagnostic process when assessing the mental health of boys aged 5-12 is complex because many diagnoses look similar in this population and boys lack the understanding and language to describe what is going on inside of them. The study highlighted the discrepancies between the diagnostic criteria in the DSM-IV and what the research participants observe with their clients.

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**Clinicians’ Practice of Diagnosing Personality Disorders**

by Gina M. Frank

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Scott Westbrock, MSW, LICSW; Mandy Hyland, MSW, LGSW

Personality disorders are a common feature of those who are treated in clinical social work today. There is controversy among those who work with adolescents on whether or not it is clinically appropriate to diagnose an adolescent with a personality disorder when, by definition of adolescence, their personality is not yet fully formed. This project discusses the issue of adolescent personality disorders and what kind of issues go into diagnosing such. The literature reviewed indicates that
indicate that diagnosis remains complex and must take into consideration factors of development, treatment, and causes of personality disorder issues in adolescents. It is important that clinical social workers who are diagnosing adolescents understand the complexity of this diagnosis, but identify the issues that are at issue. Failure to do so can impact the treatment and prognosis of adolescents that suffer the symptoms that are reflective of personality disorders. Practitioners are commonly not indicating the presence of personality disorders in adolescents. Failure to do so may actually be interfering with appropriate interventions to assist those that suffer with this form of mental illness.

How Coping with Loss is Experienced by Older Adults with Mental Illness: Through the Lenses of Professionals
by David Fundakowski

Research Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph/D., LICSW
Committee Members: Deborah Goulet, LICSW; Kelli Clancy-Kogler, LGSW; Joan Stauffer, LICSW

The goal of this research study was to explore mental health professionals’ opinions on beliefs about mental illness; beliefs about older adults; coping with loss: strategies, techniques, and specific patterns that they have discovered when working with older adults with mental illness. A qualitative research design was used. Four mental health professionals were interviewed. They completed a demographic survey and were asked open-ended questions on the aforementioned topics. The interviews were transcribed and themes were identified. The overarching themes identified include: the challenge of dealing with the negative assumptions regarding older adults with mental illness; older adults with mental illness cope with loss in a variety of ways; and older adults with mental illness face similar losses to be the most challenging. Further research should be done to investigate this topic and to gain more understanding and knowledge about older adults with mental illness. Through further research mental health professionals can establish, improve, and be better equipped to assist older adults with mental illness.

Designing and Developing a Self-Compassion Program for Social Workers
by Samantha J. Gajewski

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph. D.
Committee Members: Don Johnson, Ph. D.; Katie Mark, LGSW

Self-compassion is the practice of turning compassion and empathy towards yourself and has been linked with decreased psychic stress (including feelings of anxiety, depression, less negative and ruminating thoughts and self-talk, higher self-esteem and higher life satisfaction). Many of these psychic strains are seen among practitioners in the emotionally demanding field of social work. To aid social workers in using self-compassion to moderate professional stressors, this study used design and development research methodology to develop a self-guided program to cultivate self-
compassion. Just as design and development research calls for, this study used the literature as the theoretical framework for creating an innovation (the self-compassion program) before pilot testing the innovation and making necessary modifications of the innovation. The self-compassion program consisted of meditation on a compassionate image, free-journaling, an emotional processing worksheet and affirmative readings. This study found that the program was effective in cultivating self-compassion and that self-compassion is a valuable tool to moderate professional and personal stress. This study indicates that self-compassion should be taught among social work students and professionals in order to moderate stress and model this type of self-care to clients.

Identifying and Using Strengths and Challenges in Work with People with Asperger’s
by Tony Geckler

Research Chair: Michael Chovanec, LICSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Sara Rehman, MA, LP; Beth Fagin, LICSW

There has been an increase in demand for professional services for people with Asperger’s. This study asked several questions that would assist professionals to work with people with Asperger’s. The purpose of this study was to highlight the strengths and challenges of people with Asperger’s. Using a qualitative design, eight professionals were interviewed regarding their observations of the strengths and challenges of people with Asperger’s; how the strengths and challenges were used in treatment and how professionals can advocate for people with Asperger’s. Data was analyzed using an inductive approach taken from reviewing interview transcripts and then comparing it to the literature. The studies main findings were that: people with Asperger’s have strengths in cognitive skills and characteristics such as honesty and independence; people with Asperger’s have challenges in resisting change, theory of mind, anxiety, emotional regulation and communication skills. This study also highlighted several strategies that people with Asperger’s use to cope with their challenges. In addition, this study found that professionals need to create opportunities for people to interact with people with Asperger’s. Furthermore, a need for professionals to be educated about working with people with Asperger’s was also found. Implications of this study for social work include: a need for professionals to obtain education in working with people with Asperger’s, finding ways to create opportunities for people to interact with people with Asperger’s and to do further research on helping people with Asperger’s that have a dual diagnosis of Asperger’s and anxiety or depression.

Clinicians’ Views on Behavioral Healthcare and the Impact on Those without Coverage
by Amanda M. Gill

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Christopher Bargeron, MSW, LICSW; Leah Corder, MFT
The lack of sufficient healthcare insurance is a growing concern for many families in the United States. Many children, families, and elderly go without the medical care that they need because they do not have the finances to cover costly medical bills. By studying the barriers to one’s access to sufficient insurance coverage, policy changes can be made to equalize the healthcare system in the United States. Behavioral health clinicians currently employed with insurance corporations were invited to respond to an online survey of 12 open-ended questions regarding access to healthcare coverage and how age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status could be barriers. It was found that citizens experience many barriers to accessing sufficient insurance coverage. These barriers included, but were not limited to, age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Results show that the current healthcare system is not one in which all citizens have equal opportunity to access coverage that will provide themselves and their families with adequate care, to prevent or cure illnesses. Respondents felt that policy and law changes are needed and that the country may be successful with a universal healthcare system.

Independent Living Services for Foster Youth Preparing for Emancipation
by Heather Y. Goens-Morrison

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D
Committee Members: Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW; Carey Winkler, MSW, LICSW

This study gathered qualitative information about independent living services for foster youth and explores what additional services are needed to provide successful outcomes post-emancipation. Eleven interviews were completed with adult former foster youth (n=3), social workers (n=4), and foster parents (n=4) in South Dakota. There were a number of themes that emerged from the data: existing services, program changes, support, social networks, and advice for foster youth, foster parents, and social workers. Findings not only support previous research but also provided additional suggestions for services. Implications for social work practice and future research are also discussed.

Clinical perspectives on assessments and treatment of children exposed to violence towards pets
by Valerie L. Graser

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, MSW, LICSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Jeannine Moga, MSW, LICSW; Anna Stern, MA

When children are exposed to animal cruelty, especially in the context of family violence, where an abuser engages in violent acts towards a family pet in order to coerce, intimidate or punish a human victim those children can suffer significant consequences. Studies have found significant correlations between exposure to animal cruelty and serious developmental and conduct related consequences for the child victim, such as later perpetration of animal abuse and interpersonal...
violence. Despite this research as well as assessments tools and treatment programs developed to address this issue, there is limited research regarding actual clinical assessment of and practice with children who have witnessed and/or perpetrate animal cruelty. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions, data regarding clinical experiences including child/adolescent assessment and treatment practices around animal abuse and family violence was collected through a survey of 300 clinicians throughout the United States. The data revealed that the majority of clinicians usually ask their clients about animals with 53% asking during the initial assessments. However, only a minority (19%) ask about safety related concern regarding family pets. Clinicians are less inclined to ask about the possible witnessing of animal abuse (10%) and are only somewhat more likely to ask whether a client has committed animal abuse (20%). Despite these low numbers, the majority of clinicians (68%) believe the abuse of animals to be a mental health concern. The implications of these findings are wide, in that, despite the recent surge in information about animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, the information is not making into clinical practice. These findings reveal that there is room for significant policy and educational efforts in order to address this alarming issue.

Victim or Delinquent?: Professionals Perspectives on Behaviors of Youth Involved in Prostitution
by Laura M. Groeneweg

Research Chair: Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Lauri Appelbaum, MSW, LICSW; Andrea Simonett

This study explores the shared experiences of youth involved in prostitution, best practices for working with the population and ideological perspectives behind entry into prostitution. Previous research has been inconsistent in ideological perspectives and indicates that juveniles involved should be considered either victims or criminals. This study was a semi-standardized interview with 9 participants who are professionals and who have worked with juveniles involved in prostitution. The researcher used a grounded theory method to analyze the content of the qualitative data. Findings among interviewees consisted of five themes: 1) juveniles who are involved in prostitution are victims, 2) youth involved normalize the experience of being prostituted, 3) programs that are working with these youth should not have agendas and should meet youth where they are at, 4) programs need to be a one stop shop that meets basic needs, and 5) programs should be managed by properly trained non-judgmental staff. These finding corroborate those of previous research in that most of the juveniles that these professionals encountered were at-risk in some way but strongly refuted the previous research in that these juveniles should be criminalized for this behavior. Implications for this research include the need for additional study in this area and the development of more specialized programming for juveniles involved in this behavior.
A Mindfulness and Neuroscience Based Intervention: Stress Management and Resilience in the Workplace
by Ann Marie Gullickson

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D., LISW
Members: Kathryn A. Amundson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW; Kileen T. Smyth, MSW, LICSW

Mindfulness-based interventions in the workplace show positive outcomes in the literature due to their success in providing skill-building and behavioral change. Specifically, for health care professionals and their clients, mindfulness practice enhances the qualities of attention, affect tolerance, attunement, acceptance, empathy, equanimity, critical curiosity, egolessness, and presence. Attention and Interpretation Training (AIT) is a relatively new model of mindfulness-based treatment, grounded in neuroscience. Attention refers to a state of mindful awareness, and interpretation refers to framing our perceptions and actions in light of our higher values. In this study, employees of a community-based mental health agency participated in a 90-minute AIT training session. Ten employees were interviewed three to four weeks later to explore their lived experience of AIT. Results indicated that the practice of AIT had a positive impact on participants’ self care, relationships with clients and coworkers, and improved coping skills within the work environment. AIT also impacted participants’ orientation to time. Findings were consistent with other studies of mindfulness-based trainings in the workplace and suggest that AIT is an effective means of teaching mindfulness to employees and enhancing the workplace culture. Recommendations for further study and implications for social work practice are discussed.

The topic of Spirituality in BSW programs
by Tracy R. Hacker

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad PhD.
Committee Members: Krista Nelson, LICSW, LMFT, MSW; Karen Freed, PsyD.

This study looks at the topic of spirituality in BSW programs in the state of Minnesota. The study was conducted by a survey sent by email to all BSW program deans in the state. The results were analyzed quantitatively and had a total of 9 participants. Because there were not many participants, more studies will need to be done to further prove that spirituality in social work is important to the field. With more research, the social work field could also benefit by knowing exactly how important other social workers feel about it and offer more education and policies to help the public maintain their own feelings regarding religion and spirituality without feeling judged.
Serving Native Americans: Native American Social Service Workers Reflect on Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Values
by Mary Elise Hahn

Research Chair: Carol Kuechler, MSW, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Rose Robinson, MSW; Laura Newton, MSW

Many Native Americans experience societal and social realities such as high involvement in the child protection system, high percentages of individuals with certain health problems, and a large number of individuals in extreme poverty. Because social workers are often involved in these areas, it is likely that a social worker will work with a Native American client in his or her career. The purpose of this study was to explore with Native American social workers their ideas about the essential knowledge, skills, and values needed to practice with Native American clients. This study also identified what aspects of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Native American workers believe are crucial for social workers to know. Using a qualitative design, six Native American female social service workers were interviewed. Respondents identified four general categories of essential knowledge: cultural differences and issues, history and background, learning about each client individually, and understanding myths and gaps in knowledge. Respondents identified three general categories of essential skills: being able to build personal relationships, having open mindedness, a willingness to learn, and flexibility, and knowing how to learn about Native American history and cultural experiences. Being non-judgmental, having an open mind, not assuming superiority, and having respect were identified as essential values. Understanding placement requirements, knowing the history of and reason for ICWA, and knowing how ICWA affects your work specifically were identified as the essential aspects of ICWA. Implications for practice uncovered by this study were the need for social workers to be aware of Native American culture and be respectful and non-judgmental. This study suggested that this can be accomplished in part by focusing supervision on effective cultural interventions and worker/client relationship building and by furthering research in this area by carrying out the study quantitatively with a larger number of participants.

Crisis Workers Perceptions toward LGBT Intimate Partner Violence
by Megin Halbrook

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, Ph. D. LISW
Committee Members: Serene Thornton, MSW, LICSW; Ron Oveson, BBA

Crisis worker staff often form the frontline in the fight against interpersonal violence. Therefore, it is important that we understand any biases they may have when addressing cases of same-sex domestic violence (Brown & Groscup, 2009). One hundred twenty-three volunteers/staff at Crisis Connection responded to an online survey using a vignette depicting a domestic dispute and completed a questionnaire about their perceptions of the incident and the parties involved. LGBT relationships are often perceived as less serious than heterosexual relationships. While crisis workers have had education around LGBT issues in general, and education specific to IPV, some crisis workers continue to endorse myths of perceived less intensity in violence for LGBT relationships. The findings of this study are consistent with the notion that while LGBT IPV
Awareness has grown, participants in the study to some degree still do not acknowledge the same level of severity in heterosexual relationships as LGBT relationships. The implication for this study indicates that while there is more awareness among crisis workers about IPV in the LGBT community.

**School Social Workers’ Perspectives on School Refusal Behaviors**
by Danyelle Haley

Research Chair: Dr. Karen T. Carlson, L.I.C.S.W, PhD
Committee Members: Gina Proulx, LICSW; Dr. Janet Bertolas, PsyD

School Refusal Behavior affects approximately 1 to 2% of the total population of school aged children across elementary and secondary levels and accounts for approximately 5% of the children seen clinically (Heyne et al., 2001). The research shows that early identification and comprehensive assessments including functional analysis of the behavior are important in the development of an individualized treatment plan using cognitive behavioral methods and that cognitive behavioral therapy is quick acting treatment with lasting results (Doobay, 2008). However, multiple terminologies used to describe school refusal behavior and few measures specifically designed for assessment of school refusal behaviors make it difficult to apply research, assessment, and clinical strategies to the general population of children with school refusal behavior. The findings of this study support a need for further development of identification procedures and assessment tools specifically designed for school refusal behavior.

**Effects of Eating Disorder Diagnoses on Family Systems**
by Kelly Hams & Barbara Eisenmenger

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD
Committee Members: Kathleen Bernhoft, LICSW; Linda Kuno, RN, MPH

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of eating disorder diagnoses on family systems. The main focus of this study emphasized participant’s experiences based on family member’s eating disorder diagnoses and the corresponding treatment processes. Issues described by participants (n = 4) included: mental health issues, struggles in intimate relationships and marriage, financial expenses, isolation, conflict, family therapy, and personal growth. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Participant interviews were conducted at an outpatient eating disorder treatment facility, audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim for themes. This study indicated several implications for social work practice, including the importance of including family members in eating disorder treatment processes and educating the general public about eating disorders. Implications for future research are also discussed, specifically pertaining to the effects eating disorder diagnoses have on family systems from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations.
Guardians Ad Litem: Perspectives on Child Welfare Reform
by Jennifer J. Hanel

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Jane Hurley Johncox, MSW, LICSW; Ben Nesbitt, MSW, LGSW

The need for child welfare reform has become a topic of much discussion and at times great debate over the past half century. Despite much political and public discourse on the topic, Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) appear to have received limited voice in existing literature on the subject. As GALs are assigned to represent the best interests of children within the child welfare system, qualitative research was conducted with individuals currently serving as GALs in order to add their valuable perspectives as well as to identify potential challenges that may warrant additional focus when considering child welfare reform. Responses of participants were evaluated within the framework of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1977) and were identified on each systemic level of child welfare. In considering the microsystem, parental mental health and substance abuse issues as well as intergenerational cycles of family violence and limited social support were recognized as the greatest barriers to child safety. On the meso system, unproductive approaches to working with children and families, ineffective reunification requirements, inadequate parent/system engagement, and the need for caring and competent workers were prominent themes. Lack of adequate funding emerged as the most often cited exo system theme, as well as substantial time delays in the process, poor communication and coordination among services, and a major shortage of child protection workers. In considering macro system themes, poverty, societal concepts of the “worthy and unworthy” poor, and low priority and sense of responsibility for our nation’s children were identified as significant challenges.

Ethnic Identity: A Perspective study of Korean Adoptees and Adoptive Parents
by Nikki Hansen

Research Chair: Annette Semanchin Jones, MSW, Ph.D.
Committee Members: JaeRan Kim, MSW, LGSW; Sarah Park, Ph.D.

This qualitative study examines factors affecting the development of ethnic identity in cross-cultural Korean adoptees living in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Semi-structured interviews with adults who were adopted from Korea, and with parents who have adopted Korean children, provide perspectives on cultural experiences that influence ethnic identity formation as well as insights regarding the particular struggles of these adoptees. Findings suggest that international adoption agencies should expand post-adoption services for both adoptees and adoptive parents, and that enhanced experiences with the Korean culture may have lasting benefits for cross-cultural adoptees who are striving to achieve an integrated sense of identity.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy of Substance Use Self-Stigma Reduction
by Bess I. Harris, LSW, LADC

Research Chair: Kendra J. Garrett, Ph. D., LICSW
Committee Members: Pattijo Nwokeuku, MSW, LGSW, LADC; Randy Morris-Ostrom, JD, MS

The purpose of this study is to examine clients’ self-reported evaluation of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) strategies’ effectiveness in substance use self-stigma reduction. Self-stigmas can create detrimental effects within an individual’s life with a substance use disorder. This is a quantitative study through the use of surveys completed by clients at two substance use treatment centers in Minnesota. The data collected were analyzed through Mini-tab using frequencies and correlations to test the hypothesis of: clients will evaluate CBT strategies as effective in substance use self-stigma reduction. With frequencies calculated, participants evaluated CBT strategies components and techniques. Education was evaluated to be the most highly rated component with substance use self-stigma reduction. Disadvantages and rehearsal was evaluated to be the most highly rated technique with substance use self-stigma reduction. With correlations calculated, participants evaluated the relationship between CBT strategies (components and techniques) in reducing/decreasing the components of substance use self-stigmas (stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination) and the CBT model (thoughts, emotions, and discrimination) involved. Cognitive distortions was evaluated to highly correlate to reduce/decrease 3 of the components involved in reducing substance use self-stigmas, more specifically reducing discrimination and decreasing thoughts and emotions involved. The techniques that should be taken into account by social workers are generating alternatives, automatic thoughts, and disadvantages. This is because they were evaluated to highly correlate to reduce/decrease 3 to 4 components involved within substance use self-stigmas and the CBT model. The fact that participants evaluated these CBT strategies as highly correlated in substance use self-stigma reduction and a decrease in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors involved is very important for social workers to identify the relevance of utilizing these CBT strategies in practice. It is important for social workers to attempt to reduce self-stigmas with individuals who have substance use disorders and to consider ways in which they can influence change, be it within supporting related policies, within their agencies, within practice, and within future research.

Bullying Behavior and Interventions: Barriers Faced by School Social Workers Wishing to Involve Families
by Scott Hauge

Research Chair: Annette Semanchin-Jones MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Denette Narum LICSW; Dora Lister

While many interventions have focused on the role of peers, teachers, or the school itself, there is little information about the role of the social worker and how families might be involved in the interventions used with bullying behavior. Data was gathered from a convenience sample of 48
school social workers. The sample recruited from members of the Minnesota School Social Workers Association and provided with a 22 question survey on bullying beliefs and interventions. When school social workers were surveyed for this study, 93.6 percent indicated they do believe family has a role in the development of bullying behavior. Despite this, many respondents indicated family contact was not part of their job. Implications for social work are discussed.

Supporting Attachment between Biological Parents and their Children in Foster Care when Reunification is the Goal: An Exploration of Child Welfare Workers’ Perspectives and Efforts
by Erica Henkel

Research Chair: Valandra, MBA, MSW, LISW ABD
Members: Monica Seidel, LICSW; Betsy Bartek

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to explore county child welfare workers perspective and efforts to promote attachment between biological parents and their children in foster care. Data for this study was collected through two semi-structured focus group interviews with a total of nine county child welfare workers as participants. After the focus groups interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the interviews and performed a content analysis on the data using the grounded theory approach. A thorough analysis of the data revealed three main themes: practice and policy oriented trainings, maintaining attachment, and challenges to promoting attachment. Within the theme of maintaining attachments, there are two sub-themes: frequency of visits and engaging biological parents. In the theme of challenges to promoting attachment, there were four sub-themes: limited resources, gaps in services, lack of systemic influence, and impacts of the challenges. Implications from this research are that county child welfare workers have knowledge of attachment theory and have identified ways that it influences their work and treatment planning process. However, there are many systemic barriers that are preventing them from incorporating attachment theory more consistently into their practice. Therefore, there is a need for more research to explore the barriers to attachment-centered practice in the child welfare system.

Ways to Engage Parents When Working with Adolescents
by Chelsea R. Henry

Research Chair: Kendra J. Garrett, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members:  Angela Marti, LSW; Jennifer Gervais, MSW, LICSW

There are numerous adolescents who seek and obtain treatment each year. When a professional is working with an adolescent client, it has been found beneficial to include the parent in the treatment (Rosenstock & Vincent, 1979). This study aims to find the ways in which professionals engage parents when working with adolescent clients. This study was conducted through qualitative interviews with seven respondents. The voluntary participants were asked questions regarding their
professional opinion on how to engage parents. The themes found in this study were: the importance of relationship building, relationship components including validation, empathy, non-judgmental stance and normalizing; collaboration, flexibility with scheduling, barriers which included untreated mental health issues, untreated chemical issues, boundary issues, and socioeconomic status; and confidentiality when engaging parents when working with adolescent clients. These themes closely related to findings in previous literature however there were emerging themes regarding scheduling and confidentiality. This study aims to provide professionals with suggestions and techniques to use in practice with the parents of adolescent clients. The suggestions provided are for therapists to understand the importance of relationship building and develop specific techniques to use in practice, use collaboration when working with the parents, understand scheduling issues that may occur, prepare for possible barriers, and recognize the issue of confidentiality when working with the parents of adolescent clients.

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**Characteristics of Families Supporting Substance Users**

by Rachael A. Herbst

Research Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Lori Cargen-Beckwith, MA, LADC; Dave Schreck, LADC

This article discusses research conducted on five interviewees that were currently working with substance abusers and their families during or after the completion of substance abuse treatment. The research study was a qualitative design where participants were interviewed regarding their perceptions on family supportive characteristics towards substance abusers. The data was analyzed using ground theory and open coding. The participants showed a mutual agreement that family-based interventions were successful with substance abuse treatment. The interviewees thought that if family members and substance abuser felt love from each other, showed willingness to support the substance abuser, and each family member feel safe are some examples of why family-based interventions are successful. These findings show support for the importance of family-based interventions in substance abuse treatment.

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**The Impact of Faith-Based Mentoring on the Christian Spirituality of Youth**

by Lindsey S. Herzog

Research Chair: Colin Hollidge, MSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW; Kristi Pingel, BA

Youth mentoring has been established as a valuable intervention and the presence of faith in youth has been shown to be a protective factor. These two developmental resources are merged in faith-based mentoring. In this study, 24 youth engaged in Christian faith-based mentor relationships are surveyed. The hypothesis is that the more that Christian faith practices are integrated into the mentor relationship, the stronger the youth's Christian spiritual development will be. This study supported the hypothesis; a positive correlation was found between the integration of Christian faith
practices in the mentor relationship and the youth’s Christian spiritual development. This finding strengthens the notion of faith-based mentoring as a valuable resource for youth.

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**The Clinical Social Worker’s Use of Attachment Theory When Working With Parents**
by Emily K. Hunsicker

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, LISW
Committee Members: George V. Baboila, MSW, LICSW; Amirthini Keefe, MSW, LICSW

The lack of a clear model for clinical work with parents of adolescents who are in psychotherapy has been implicated as a possible factor in compromised therapeutic outcomes (Graves, Shelton & Kaslow, 2009). Research on Attachment Theory has supported the intergenerational link between adaptive and maladaptive patterns of relating to primary caregivers, and the effect of these patterns on one’s ability to regulate emotions and self-reflect (Wallin, 2007). Less research has clarified the clinical implications of these findings for mental health practitioners working with adolescents, whose arrival in psychotherapy often signals a breakdown in their relationships with their parents. The purpose of this project was to explore the ways in which clinical social workers who use attachment theory when working with parents of their adolescent clients in psychotherapy, conceptualize the parent’s role in the therapy, make assessments and design interventions, and evaluate outcomes with adolescents. Using a qualitative design, four volunteer clinical social workers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of how drawing from attachment theory impacts their work with both adolescent clients and their parents. Categories were developed from the participants’ responses and then linked to the relevant literature. The findings indicated that practitioners working with an attachment lens found that parent work to be a critical variable in supporting positive therapeutic outcomes for adolescents, suggesting a more expansive conceptualization of traditional individual psychotherapy. Providing psycho-education on normal adolescent development and helping parents to explore and repair some of their own attachment disruptions emerged as critical interventions taken from the adolescent’s perspective. These findings underscored the need for developing protocols that address the particular practice and practical issues involved when working clinically with parents and greater supports to clinicians in the form of peer consultation groups to help them navigate treatment involving multiple stakeholders.

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**Dialogue Between Cancer Patients and Physicians About Complementary and Alternative Medicine**
by Jacqueline Hutchinson

Research Chair: Annette Semanchin Jones, MSW, Ph.D. Candidate
Committee Members: Marcia Carlson, MSW, LICSW; Janet Dahlem, MA

The focus of this research was to examine the dialogue between physicians and cancer patients regarding the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). Specifically this research
sought to answer the question of whether patients struggle to communicate with their physicians regarding the use of CAM, whether social worker involvement could improve and empower patients to talk about CAM, and to determine if patients’ use of CAM increased their sense of power and control in the healthcare setting.

Using a qualitative design, eight volunteers participated in this study. Participants were between the ages of 42 and 72 years old. Current cancer patients and cancer survivors were interviewed. Current cancer patients were in various stages of disease and treatment. Of the 8 participants, 4 learned about CAM prior to treatment, 3 used CAM prior to their cancer diagnosis, and 1 learned about CAM after diagnosis.

The findings indicated cancer patients do experience difficulty while communicating with their physician regarding the use of CAM. Only one patient felt completely supported in the decision to incorporate CAM into the treatment plan, two participants felt their physician was antagonistic or argumentative about CAM, while the other five participants reported their physicians were simply neutral. Participants with neutral physicians reported that although the physicians did not disagree with the use of CAM, neither were they supportive. Social work involvement was inconclusive due to only one participant having worked with a social worker during treatment. Finally, although patients reported the use of CAM was a way to have control over themselves and their disease, findings did not support cancer patients’ use of CAM was a tool to increase power and control in the healthcare setting.
understanding about CAM’s effectiveness and limitations, thereby preparing them to offer appropriate and meaningful counsel to their clients who suffer from chronic pelvic or vulvar pain.

*Substance Abuse and Older Adults: Assessing Social Workers’ Perceived Preparedness for Effective Treatment*

by Erin R. Jerome

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Rochelle Rottenberg, MSW; Kimberly Bauman, MSW LICSW

As medical advances increase and the baby boomers begin to age into retirement, the community will be faced with a demographic shift in the age and subsequent needs of its population. Social workers in particular have been challenged in recent years to meet the psychological, emotional, and social needs of older individuals, including substance use issues. Studies indicate that 6%-16% of individuals age 65 and above suffer from some sort of substance use disorder, with alcohol and prescription drug abuse as the leading diagnoses. This study discusses the unique issues associated with substance abuse in later years, and describes social workers’ levels of preparedness for facing said challenges. Social workers from the Twin Cities area were surveyed to determine their levels of preparedness based upon five scales: formal education, C.E.U. trainings, knowledge of interventions, experience with older substance users, and confidence. Results of the survey are described. Implications for social work practice, research, and education are discussed.

*Working With Elderly With Eating Disorders: Best Practices*

by Joan E. John

Research Chair: Michael G. Chovanec, PhD., LICSW, LMFT
Members: Stephanie Burcusa, PhD., LP; Linnea Dumke, LICSW

While eating disorders can be considered more or less commonplace among the young and there are treatment measures in place for helping them to cope, there is a surprising lack of research given to the treatment for late onset eating disorders in the elderly. For the purposes of this research paper, the elderly will be defined as individuals 60 years of age and older. Also for the purposes of this research paper the term elder-onset eating disorders will be used to denote the presence of an eating disorder in an individual 60 years of age and older. This research was launched in order to discover the best practices in working with elderly people ages sixty and older, who presented for the first time and have been diagnosed with an eating disorder. The research even questioned the veracity of the idea that these elderly people may present for the first time at such an old age. Six professionals who work at and treat patients at two facilities for treating eating disorders, were participants in a qualitative study. In this study interviews were conducted, taped and transcribed in order to produce the information for this research. It is interesting to note that the participants believed that eating disorders can and do occur in later life as they may present across the lifespan. That some may struggle for years with an eating
disorder before presentation was an accepted belief. Also significant as well as insignificant
situations in a person's life may trigger these eating disorders.
In considering the best means of treatment for the elderly, practitioners varied in their approaches,
however, the consensus showed Cognitive Behavior Therapy along with group and family
intervention seemed to have given the best results among patients/clients. One was eclectic in
approach in that CBT was not sufficient by itself, and another felt that the Client-centered approach
was a good fit with CBT to be effective in treatment.
In conclusion I believe that this study in connection with this particular age group is one that should
be pursued in the future, and hope that even though there is not a robust population of eating
disordered elderly, this research should nevertheless continue.

Secondary Trauma Experiences of Minnesota Child Protection Workers
by Adrienne Johnson

Research Chair: Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, MSW, PHD, LICSW
Committee Members: Kimberly Stone, MSW, LISW; Joanne Mooney, M.A.

This qualitative study examined the secondary trauma experiences of workers in child protection
services. The literature highlighted common themes of history, defining trauma and secondary
trauma terms, naming associated with secondary trauma, secondary trauma impact on social
workers, and self-care. The research question for the study was: What are the experiences of
secondary trauma on child protection workers? The current research involved in-depth participant
interviews of ten county workers in the public child protection system. Guided by Grounded Theory,
the data was analyzed using open coding and developed into themes. Major themes revealed in the
findings were varying definitions of secondary trauma, common symptoms of secondary trauma,
importance of team work, limited supervisory knowledge and support, coping mechanisms in
response to secondary trauma, influence of strength-based practice on secondary trauma, negative
media portrayal of child protection, and recommendations for agency change. Practice and systemic
implications were that secondary worker trauma should be addressed through increased clinical
supervision and support, establishment of agency protocols, and consistent training on secondary
trauma. Secondary worker trauma impacted public child protection workers as evidenced by
symptoms including sleeplessness, worrying and second guessing, some with lasting results on the
worker and agency regarding resilience or effectiveness in achieving client outcomes. Implications
for individual workers include improved worker well being and enhanced work performance
resulting in better support and service to the client. The topic of secondary worker trauma should be
studied at a greater depth with a larger sample size to further contribute to secondary trauma
research knowledge.
Secondary Traumatic Stress & The Child Protection Professional
by Amy Johnson

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, MSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Cynthia Shypulski, MSW; Deb Flick, MSW

Thousands of dollars have been spent trying to understand and reduce burnout and turnover in child protective services; however, little effort has been made to determine the prevalence of secondary traumatic stress among child protection professionals. If secondary traumatic stress is not recognized and addressed, caseworkers’ work performance and emotional well-being may well be compromised. A quantitative data analysis was completed using an online survey tool distributed to local child protection professionals. Information regarding personal stress factors and coping strategies was gathered. This research study examined the characteristics, perceptions, and experiences of child protection workers in their work environments. Protective factors such as quality supervision, social support in the workplace, and a personal mission to be of service to vulnerable children and families was found to mitigate the effects of secondary traumatic stress in child protection professionals.

Concurrent Planning: A Foster Parent’s Perspective
by Tiffany Johnson

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, MSW, PhD.
Committee Members: Tami Baker-Olson, MSW; Lucy Favorite

Between the fiscal years of 1984 and 1995, the foster care population grew from an estimated 276,000 children to 494,000 (General Accounting Office, 1997). Many more children entered foster care while few left, thus creating foster care drift. One method of addressing this issue is concurrent planning; a practice method that follows two tracks of permanency simultaneously: reunification with the children’s biological family and adoption. The purpose of this study is to describe foster parents lived experience of the concurrent planning process. This study employed qualitative research methods by interviewing five foster parents who have experience with the concurrent planning process. The following themes emerged from the data: concurrent planning process; contact with the biological family; accountability; attachment, and suggestions for all parties involved in the process. This study suggests there are certain characteristics of foster parents who are more equipped to participate in the concurrent planning process. Therefore it is essential for social workers to mindfully recruit, educate, retain, and support foster parents for the specific purpose of participating in concurrent planning. Children’s extended biological families could be ideal candidates. Findings supported by the literature, unexpected findings, practice implications, policy implications, and implications for future research are also discussed.
Adverse Effects in Psychotherapy
by Amy Kamel

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW, LICSW; Eva Solomonson, MSW, LISW

Fourteen Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW) completed an online questionnaire about their knowledge and perceptions of adverse effects in psychotherapy, and the role of educational facilities in therapists’ professional knowledge of the subject. Idiographic data was gathered through an electronic survey and analyzed using a grounded-theory approach. Non-demographic questions in the survey reflected information about the three major themes of the conceptual framework of this study: the therapeutic alliance, countertransference, and systemic influences on the overall therapeutic experience. Results indicated variable practices among clinicians regarding the practice of “checking in” with clients on the effectiveness the therapeutic alliance. Therapists generally placed high importance on their need to work through their own issues through supervision and/or their own therapy, and half of the respondents cited a personal experience in which they felt that premature termination occurred due to countertransference issues. Results also pointed to possible inconsistency and/or variable emphasis on the subject of adverse effects in MSW curriculum. Implications and limitations associated with the research are considered.

The Lack of Autistic Service Providers and Funding Needs
by Peggy L. Kinzler

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, MSW, MA, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Lisa Smith-Inman, MA, LPC; Joy Vivian, MSW, LICSW

The rate of autism diagnosis is growing faster than the United States and other countries can keep up with in terms of service provisions. The purpose of this study is to examine the lack of appropriate services in the area of housing options, social skills training and appropriate and available jobs and job supports for the individuals with Autism as they age out of the education system and reach adulthood. Aging out of the education system is defined, for the purposes of this study, as those individuals who have graduated from their high school and received their diploma. The age would be primarily eighteen to twenty-one year olds.

This research used qualitative methods to examine the needs and unmet needs of autistic individuals who are aging out of the education system. This research examined parents/caregivers of autistic individuals responses to a survey through the process of content analysis. This study examined the needs of autistic individuals and identified any unmet needs. This study also examined the area of financial needs of these individuals and their ability to pay for their service needs. This sample was a convenience sample of the parents/caregivers of adult autistic individuals served by a Minnesota county social service agency.
The responses to the qualitative survey in this study identified unmet needs as individuals with autism transition out of the education system. Respondents reported that the needs during this transition time include housing, social skills and independent living skills, jobs appropriate for their skill level and closer supervision on the job, social groups, transportation and appropriate medical and dental care.

Implications for Social Work Practice in the areas of advocacy at the governmental level, connecting individuals with autism to needed resources. There are also implications for social service organizations for evaluating programming for autistic individuals. The implication for policy changes needed at the governmental level for funding resources needed.

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**I Acted Out, Now What? An Exploratory Qualitative Study of the Therapeutic Relationship between Staff and Youth After a Physical Restraint**

by Kelly Knaeble

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Theresa McPartlin, MSW; Abby Schmoldt, MSW

Physical restraints performed on youth is a very controversial topic currently, with many organizations moving away from the use of physical restraints, it is important to fully understand their effects on the youth and staff relationship and their effectiveness in behavior management. The purpose of this project was to explore the perceptions of the staff of the physical restraint’s affect on the therapeutic alliance between staff and youth. Using a qualitative design, seven staff who have performed physical restraints with youth were interviewed regarding their beliefs on physical restraint training, characteristics that build a strong therapeutic alliance, the effects a restraint has on the therapeutic alliance, and alternative techniques to youth behavior management. Data were analyzed using the grounded theory approach in which responses were coded and combined into themes when the same ideas were repeated more than once. The findings indicated that most staff feel training is not realistic or effective in preparing them for performing physical restraints. Participants had all different ideas on what characteristics build a strong therapeutic alliance and alternative techniques to behavior management. Most participants felt that the therapeutic alliance was not affected in the long run by a physical restraint because of the strength of the relationship before the restraint and the processing of the situation after the restraint. These findings show the importance of the strong therapeutic alliance in the repair of a possibly traumatic event of a physical restraint as well as a call for more training surrounding de-escalation techniques.

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**Animal-Assisted Interventions Effects on Adolescents Suffering from Anxiety: Providers Opinions**

by Dana Knight

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph. D., LISW
Committee Members: Kelly Wesner, LISW; Tanya Welsch, LISW
Animal-assisted interventions is a newly emerging in the research literature field despite its long history in the field. Literature suggests that working with an animal can increase self-esteem and decrease both depression and anxiety. The purpose of this research was to explore practitioners’ opinions of animal-assisted interventions and their effects on adolescents suffering from anxiety. Quantitative and qualitative methods were both used to survey practitioners regarding their opinions of animal-assisted interventions. The data was analyzed and themes and sub-themes emerged and were compared with previous literature. Findings showed that indeed practitioners did believe that animal-assisted interventions can help to alleviate adolescents’ anxiety symptoms. Practitioners reported clients responding both psychologically and physiologically to animal interactions and showed better focus and attention within a session. Literature mirrors these findings that animal-assisted interventions can be a viable option for adolescents with anxiety. Future research including the use of anxiety instruments to empirically demonstrate the effectiveness of animal-assisted interventions will be critical to solidifying these strategies as a legitimate practice to be using with clients.

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Crisis Intervention Team (CIT): Police Perceptions of Mental Health Training Effectiveness
by Kate Frances Kramschuster

Research Chair: Jessica E. Toft Ph.D.
Committee Members: Jane F. Hurley-Johncox LICSW; Alyssa Walswick LGSW

Since the process of deinstitutionalization there has been an increase of interactions between the law enforcement and people with mental illness. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a program that attempts to improve safety for officers and people with mental illness and to redirect individuals with mental illness from the criminal justice system to the mental health system. The purpose of this research was to determine efficacy of CIT training from the perspective of CIT trained officers. Using a qualitative study, twenty CIT trained officers completed an on-line survey regarding their ability to identify mental illness in their work, de-escalation skills used in a mental health crises and increase collaboration between the criminal justice system and the mental health system. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents felt CIT training increased their ability to identify mental illness in their work and de-escalation skills were gained for managing mental health crises. In regards to collaboration between the criminal justice system and the mental health system majority of the respondents felt supported by the criminal justice system and had favorable interactions with the mental health system. Barriers identified from the criminal justice system were reluctant and negative attitudes from non-CIT officers and lack of funding for the program. Although respondents spoke favorably about interactions with the mental health system, there were systemic concerns regarding services available for people with mental illness and mental health law. These findings provide evidence that CIT training is effective from the perspective of CIT trained officers. It also indicates there continues to be a need to improve collaboration between the criminal justice system and the mental health system.
Exercise and Healthy Eating Habits Among Those with a Severe Mental Illness: Professionals’ Perspectives on What Works
by Christina M. Krol

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Sara Kelley, LICSW; Michelle Gricus, LICSW

Historically, the mental health field has operated from a medical model perspective, which places little emphasis on the importance of exercise and nutrition (Stickley & Timmons, 2006). The purpose of this research study was to find out mental health providers opinions on what might improve exercise and nutrition habits among adults with severe mental illnesses. Previous research has found that many barriers that those with mental illness encounter reduce the likelihood that nutrition and exercise recommendations are practiced. The study consisted of focus groups and an interview of mental health providers. The participants identified many areas that could help those with mental illness achieve exercise and nutrition goals. The findings support the need for including exercise and nutrition as viable forms of treatment for those with severe mental illness. Additionally, implications for social work practice as well as areas for future research were discussed.

Barriers to Treatment for Veterans with PTSD and their Families
by Elizabeth Kuhn

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Kari Fletcher, ABD, MSW, LICSW; Joseph Heim, Ph.D.

Many soldiers are coming back from OEF/OIF (Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom) and having PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) symptoms. PTSD not only affects the traumatized person but also their family. There are challenges that military families face and the importance of understanding potential barriers to treatment for military families when the retuning veteran is experiencing of PTSD. The inclusion of family members in treatment can create positive, enduring change for veterans with PTSD. I also found that sixty percent of the respondents were not offered any family therapy services. Family therapy services have been shown to reduce recidivism rate for therapy and lower difficulties with PTSD symptoms. Another significant piece that was shown was that sixty percent of the veterans drove over forty miles to the nearest VA medical clinic for treatment.

How are Female Therapists Affected by Their Work With Male Sexual Offenders?
by Tracy M. Kuphal

Research Chair: Mike Chovanec, PhD LICSW
Committee Members: Pam Hyatt, MSW LICSW; Richard Weinberger, PhD
The purpose of this study was to explore how female therapists are affected by their work with sexual offenders. This study collected qualitative data from eight female therapists working with adult male sexual offenders. Qualitative interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks. The female therapists’ experiences span residential, outpatient, and secured facility settings. Interviews were audio recorded to assist in data analysis. The strongest themes found in the study were shock (8 of 8 respondents), self-care and support (8 of 8 respondents), and client capacity and desire to change (8 of 8 respondents). Findings that coincided with the literature included self-care and support and awareness (6 of 8 respondents). Both themes give validity to Farrenkopf’s Phases of Impact theory. A theme not in the literature but relevant in this study is the impact of media on society’s view of sexual offenders. The relevance in these themes serves to enhance practitioner knowledge, in research or practice, on the effects of working with adult male sexual offenders on female therapists.

Exploring the Link Between a Good Death and Ego Transcendence
by Ami Ladd

The purpose of this research was to explore if there is a link between a good death and ego transcendence. Using a qualitative design, eight hospice professionals were interviewed. Participants were obtained by snowball sampling. All of them were Caucasian and between 32 and 65 years of age. The participants were asked questions about settings that might impact the dying process, what they considered a good death, and psychological and spiritual changes in their patients. Data was analyzed using inductive methods in order to examine common themes and to connect findings to the literature review. Findings indicated that the hospice environment meets many of the established criteria for a good death. Findings also suggested that patients in hospice are likely to die a good death. With this criteria met, there is some indication that patients can experience psychological or spiritual changes that suggest higher stages of consciousness. It was unclear if this was ego transcendence. The current definitions of ego transcendence are difficult to quantify because there is no current data that supports a framework for levels of higher consciousness. However it is clear from this study that patient’s who have accepted their death and come to some sense of resolution and peace, do seem to experience transpersonal realms. Results suggest that this topic would benefit from more extensive research utilizing the direct experiences of the patients instead of secondary observations.

Transition to Parenthood: Experiences of Adoptive Parents
by Allyson M. Larsen

The purpose of this research was to explore how female therapists are affected by their work with sexual offenders. This study collected qualitative data from eight female therapists working with adult male sexual offenders. Qualitative interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks. The female therapists’ experiences span residential, outpatient, and secured facility settings. Interviews were audio recorded to assist in data analysis. The strongest themes found in the study were shock (8 of 8 respondents), self-care and support (8 of 8 respondents), and client capacity and desire to change (8 of 8 respondents). Findings that coincided with the literature included self-care and support and awareness (6 of 8 respondents). Both themes give validity to Farrenkopf’s Phases of Impact theory. A theme not in the literature but relevant in this study is the impact of media on society’s view of sexual offenders. The relevance in these themes serves to enhance practitioner knowledge, in research or practice, on the effects of working with adult male sexual offenders on female therapists.
Despite the growing number of parents who choose adoption, research on adoption, specifically focusing on the transition for parents is limited. The overall image that emerges from the literature is that the process of adoption and the transition are negative experiences for parents. Previous research indicates that among other issues, agencies are not readily available to parents. Also, parents report that they lacked support from agency workers. The research does assert that overall parents report a great deal of joy and happiness as a result of adopting a child. This study offers perspectives from five parents who have adopted children through single session qualitative interviews. An analysis of the interviews yielded some congruent results and some contrasts to the literature. Themes emerged from the analysis including, factors leading to the decision to adopt, grief and loss, challenges, faith and spirituality, transition to parenthood, support, impact on marriage, joy and happiness, adoption communication and race. The adoption process and transition to parenthood were especially of note. Incredible feelings of joy and happiness were expressed by the couple. The present research is limited to a small sample of participants. This study opens up the opportunity for further research in the adoption field.

Design and Development of an Anger Management Innovation
by Jill M. Larson

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Amanda Szulczewski, MA, LPCC; Kristen Knisely, MSW, LGSW

This study used a design and development research methodology to field test an innovation for direct-care staff to use with developmentally disabled clients who have anger management issues. Numerous treatments and programs have been developed for this population because there was a need for them. Day program treatment staff reported using physical restraints as the main way to control disregulated clients and that they lacked alternative methods for teaching clients how to control their anger. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to design and develop an anger management innovation for direct-care staff to teach clients to regulate their anger. Nine direct-care staff working in a non-profit program with clients who have anger issues were trained in the innovation, used it with their clients, and provided feedback to refine the innovation for future use with this population. The final version of the innovation, Mind Your Anger, is appended in the report. Implication for practice and further research were also discussed.

Seeking help before separation: A study about couples and their relationships
by Nicole E. Larson, CT

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, MPP, Ph.D., LISW
Committee Members: Teya F. Dahle, MSW, LICSW; Bekah Saliterman, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of the present study is two-fold: (1) to investigate, using quantitative data, the factors that may motivate couples to seek professional therapeutic relationship help including demographic differences, as well as (2) to investigate what factors serve as barriers to couples that are having significant issues but are not in therapy. This paper aims to support the hypotheses: (1) women are
more likely to suggest seeking relationship help before men, and that men are more likely to not want therapy, (2) there are demographic differences between couples with therapy experiences versus couples without therapy experience, (3) there is a long period of time that passes from the time a problem is first identified until a couple actually seeks help from a professional source, (4) previous therapy experience (traditional couple’s therapy and/or premarital preparation) increases the likelihood that a couple will seek additional forms of therapy, (5) married couples are more likely to seek professional help than non-married committed couples, and (6) there are many reasons why couples report not wanting therapy. A primarily quantitative survey was used to collect data from a snowball and convenience sampling of respondents currently in a heterosexual relationship. The results indicated that there were statistically significant associations between a participant’s experience with therapy (TE) and age, religion, number of marriages, number of divorces, and pre-marital therapy experience. Some results needing further exploration included females both suggesting professional help and contacting the therapist first before their partner, and results for couples wanting to start therapy. This study concludes, similar to the literature review, that there were significant differences between respondents with therapy experience (TE) and respondents without TE in their help-seeking behaviors, demographics, and barriers to treatment.

Factors in successful adoptions of older children
by Megan R. Leopold

Adoptions of older children have increased in recent decades as a result of: a greater focus on permanency planning, fewer infant children available for adoption, and more societal acceptance of adoption. There are many unique challenges involved with adopting an older child. A systematic review of existing literature was conducted to examine contributing factors to successful placements of older children. Of the ten studies included in the systematic review, five themes emerged: adoption preparation, adoption stability, placement type, adopted child problems, and adoption satisfaction. Future research on older children adoptions is necessary in order to better prepare adoptive families and adoption workers for the challenges associated with adopting an older child. More specifically, a greater focus on post-adoption support and services is critical to the future success of older children adoptions. Implications for social work practice are also discussed.

LICSWs Comfort Levels working with the GLB Community
by Kasey Loidolt

This research aimed to study the factors that affect social workers’ comfort level working with gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) individuals, couples, and families. Data was collected from 209 licensed
independent clinical social workers (LICSWs) in the state of Minnesota. An online survey was used to capture respondents’ preparation and comfort levels of working with the GLB community, the sources from which they have learned about the GLB community, their support for the legalization of same-sex relationships, and their religious affiliation and behaviors. LICSWs’ supported the legalization of same-sex marriage and reported being prepared, and comfortable working with the GLB community. Age and geographic location (rural vs. urban) had no effect on LICSWs comfort level working with the GLB community; however, one’s religiosity did have a negative effect on LICSWs comfort level. Respondents indicated that acquaintances, clinical experience, and graduate school were the top three sources from which they have learned about the GLB community. The implications for social work practice include advocacy for the rights of GLB individuals, couples, and families, particularly, legislation regarding the legalization of same-sex relationships.

**Evaluation of Aggression Replacement Training: A group treatment program for incarcerated High-risk offenders**

by Shoua Lor

Research Chair: Michael Chovanec, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Gary Keifenheim, MSW, LICSW; Ellen Hartnett, MSW, LICSW
This qualitative study focused on behavioral changes identified by high-risk offenders who have completed an Aggression Replacement Training, and how those changes were achieved. Six participants were interviewed. The participants were asked a series of questions relating to behavioral changes and what helped them make those changes. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed into text narratives. The 6 major themes emerged were: (a) Handling conflict; (b) Anticipation for change; (c) Confidence in their ability to change; (d) Not alone in trying to change; (e) Commitment to change; and (f) Support from group members outside of group. The implications for social work practice include the importance of planning for evaluation, the value of group intervention process and facilitator support, and implementing role-plays into more interventions used for this population, both inside correctional facilities and out in the community.

**Clinician’s Perspectives on Treatment Option for Co-occurring Eating and Substance Use Disorders**

by Courtney Lovgren

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, PhD
Committee Members: Elizabeth Rezek LICSW, LADC; Kim Raske, LADC

The purpose of this study is to examine the co-occurrence of substance use disorders and eating disorders. Lifetime prevalence rates of substance use disorders (SUD) combined with Anorexia Nervosa have been reported to be 12-18% and rates of substance use disorders co-occurring with Bulimia Nervosa have been reported at 30-70%. The high prevalence of co-occurrence and mortality rates suggest that this is an issue of high importance, and lead to the research question at hand; what do clinicians view as treatment options for individuals with co-occurring substance abuse and eating disorders. This study was a qualitative research design, consisting of interviews with
clinicians who treat clients that are diagnosed with eating disorders and/or substance use disorders. All of the research participants felt they were competent in addressing general co-occurring mental health diagnoses, but not all participants felt competent in addressing substance use disorders within their treatment programs.

Increasing Adherence among Dialysis Patients through Social Work Interventions
by Roberta J. Losure

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Theresa Kelly McPartlin, LICSW; Peter A. Coleman, LGSW

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a worldwide public health problem - the number of new patients with CKD continues to grow each year. Increasingly high numbers of persons with CKD are placed on kidney dialysis. Social workers in dialysis clinics are a critical facet of the care received by these persons. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the prevalence of adherence issues among patients using kidney dialysis, and what social work interventions have proven effective when caring for patients and families.

A one-time group interview was conducted, which consisted of six Master level social workers. Participants were based on a convenience sample. The group interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. The five primary themes that emerged from the group interview were non-adherent behaviors, staff interventions, depression, chemical dependency, and support networks for dialysis patients.

The discussion that was uncovered in relation to these themes is the basis of the findings of this research. The experienced group provided interesting feedback, which identified the prevalence of adherence issues among dialysis patients. The results also identified social work interventions which have proven effective. Dialysis social workers play a critical role in the treatment of persons on dialysis.

A Retrospective Study on Adults of Color Who Aged Out of Foster Care: A Journey into Adulthood
by Alyssa M. Lovgren & Christine M. Dumke

Research Chair: Valandra, MSW, LISW, ABD
Committee Members: Tonya Beck, BA; Mary Weeks, LISW

Foster care is needed when a youth has been removed from their home due to abuse, neglect and/or other safety concerns. Although most youth are reunified with their primary caregiver, there are a number of youth who age out, get kicked out or leave foster care. When exiting out of foster care a youth typically has no permanent home. This qualitative research used a strengths-based lens to give a voice to former youth who are of color and have transitioned out of foster care. The purpose of
this research is to gain insight into factors that influenced and supported their transition into adulthood. The researchers interviewed three participants. Findings suggest that relationship’s built with these youth is the primary supporting factor during their transition from foster care to adulthood. Secondary, is the professional’s investment in youth that they serve; professionals invest by being aware of resources for youth in foster care, allowing their practice to be youth focused, and by preparing youth for interdependent living rather than independent living. Furthermore, the findings indicate a need for a higher standard of care in the recruitment and retention of foster parents.

Untold Stories:
Women’s Perspectives on Their Journeys from Sexual Trauma to Prostitution
by Amariah Houseknecht Lowman

Research Chair: Valandra, MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Sharon Haas, MSW; Megan Close

This phenomenological study examined the subjective experiences of female survivors of sexual violence and prostitution. The study was conducted to answer the research question: How does being a victim of sexual violence impact a woman throughout her life course, specifically considering the affect on her personal identity and involvement in prostitution?

The participants in the study were women with a history of sexual abuse as children and prostitution in adolescence or adulthood. Data was gathered via individual interviews with these women to gain their subjective perspectives and personal narratives. Themes that surfaced included: childhood abuse and trauma, placement in the foster care system, running away from home, homelessness as an adolescent, use of drugs and alcohol, loss of self-esteem, seeking money, facing challenges and survival, the meaning of parenting, and the need for support systems.

Implications for social work practice with women who have been repeatedly victimized highlight the importance of genuine empathy and understanding of the ripple effect initiated by sexual violence. This study also emphasized the need for social workers serving this vulnerable population to help these women build positive support systems to aid in their stability, healing, and ability to move forward.

Latino Immigrants Perceptions in Adjusting to Life in the United States: What Can We Learn
by Kathleen J. Dungey Malinchoc

Research Chair: Al Holloway, MSW, PsyD., LICSW
Committee Members: Lori Kendall MSW, LGSW; Sarah Schaefer, MSW, LICSW; Carole Stiles, MSW, LICSW; Umbelina Cremer

As globalization exerts powerful social, economic, and political forces on nations large and small, the two hundred year old south to north migration movement from Latin America to the United States shows no signs of stopping. Latinos comprise the largest group of immigrants in the United States
with up to a million entering the country each year. Current census projections indicate almost one quarter of the United States population will be of Latino origin by the year 2050. As our nation confronts new and ongoing challenges in an increasingly diversified society, how can we, as social workers, make future plans to better address their needs? Utilizing nomothetic, qualitative research methods, the researcher interviewed nine Latino immigrants regarding their views, perceptions, and experiences in adjusting to life in the United States. Having immigrated to the U.S. at varied life stages, the participants provide insights to their adjustments from a developmental perspective. The findings identified themes shared by most or all participants regarding initial, middle, and later adjustment stages in living in the U.S. related to sociocultural norms, socioeconomic, familial, and environmental challenges as well as environmental and sociocultural challenges and barriers in interfacing with the dominant culture. This explorative research may provide information to better prepare culturally-competent clinical social workers and other health and human service professionals to work with this population. Additionally, suggestions are provided to further research and practice in work with Latinos.

Women Veterans’ Perceptions on Barriers to Services
by Kelley N. Marks

Research Chair: Dr. Lance Peterson, Ph.D., LICSW
Committee Members: Hector Matascastillo, MSW, LGSW; Trista Matascastillo

With the emergence of women in the military, this research set out to explore women Veterans’ perceptions of barriers to services. The researcher used a snowball sampling technique. Data was retrieved in a semi-structured interview asking questions about military culture, combat experience, readjustment, and barriers to services. Grounded theory was employed to search for themes during analysis. Five themes emerged from the research: 1) assumptions in military culture about women’s physical limitations, 2) reintegration after deployment, 3) sexual harassment within the military, 4) medical complications, and 5) poor communication in available resources and benefits. Future research and social work implications revolve around breaking down the perceived gender barriers, requiring similar sexual harassment measures in the military as there are in civilian sectors, and finding a better way to provide reintegration programs and a complete benefit resource packet.

Foster Parents’ Knowledge of Mental Health Diagnoses
by Charlotte McDonald, BSW

Research Chair: Karen Carlson, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Wendy Hendrickson, MSW, LGSW; Sara Mosher, BAS

Research has shown that children in foster care placement often carry mental health diagnoses and have behavior disorders (Clausen, Landsverk, Ganger, Chadwick, & Litrownik, 1998; Halfon, Mendonca, & Berkowitz, 1995; McIntyre & Kessler, 1986; Pasztor, Hollinger, Inkelas, & Halfon, 2006; Pilowsky, 1995; Schniederman et al., 1998; & Stein, Rae Grant, Ackland, & Avison, 1994).
This research utilizes a qualitative survey method to identify the mental health challenges Sherburne County foster parents are faced with in regards to the foster children in their care and whether these foster parents have adequate training to meet these mental health needs. Results indicate that foster parents do identify significant mental health concerns with their foster children and foster parents were able to also describe some information relative to mental health diagnoses. However, the knowledge about children’s mental health diagnoses seemed fragmented and incomplete. Overwhelmingly, Sherburne County foster parents identified that they would be willing and available to participate in more training than is required, as they too see it as a need for them in order to provide the best care possible to every child.

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**Cardiovascular Disease and Depression: The Role of Social Work in Reducing Co-morbidity**
by Anne McDonald

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Judy Rognli, PNP; Doretta Stark, MSW

Depression has been well documented to be an independent risk factor for the onset and poor prognosis of cardiovascular disease (CVD), yet approximately 50% of cardiovascular physicians are unaware of this risk factor (Feinstein et al., 2006). This purpose of this study was to explore the knowledge base of hospital social workers regarding the correlation between depression and cardiovascular disease, and beliefs about whether or not screening for depression should be a high clinical priority for the acute cardiac population. Using a quantitative design, 24 hospital social workers from various health care systems in the state of Minnesota completed an anonymous online survey about their recognition regarding the relationship between cardiovascular disease and depression. Respondents were also asked to indicate their professional level of importance about whether or not social workers screening for depression in cardiac patients should be a high clinical priority in an acute care setting. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and then linked to previous related literature. The findings indicated that a majority of hospital social workers are aware that depression is an independent risk factor of cardiovascular disease and believe that screening for depression should be a high clinical priority within the acute care setting. Additionally, social workers felt that depression is linked to poorer patient outcomes, decreased medical compliance, and higher incidence of re-hospitalization. These findings point to the need for clinically prepared social workers to be employed in the hospital environment and be offered the role of conducting depression screening assessments for the cardiac patient population.

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**Off Label use of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy**
by Kimberly K. McDonald

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: David Gibson, MSW, LICSW; David Huebsch, MA, LMFT
Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) was originally designed to treat women diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. However, recent adaptations to the DBT model have shown promise with multiple diagnoses. The purpose of this study is to examine the off label use of DBT in clinical practice. MSW clinicians currently employed in various clinical settings were invited to participate in this study. Using a qualitative design, participants of the study were interviewed and asked to answer eight open ended questions. Interview questions inquired about the use of DBT in clinical practice, effectiveness of DBT, off label use of DBT, and the impact of off label DBT on the practitioner. Results of this study have indicated that the off label use of DBT is common in clinical practice with clients of multiple diagnoses. This study replicates previous research findings supporting the use of off label DBT to treat clients. Further research needs to be completed as limited research was found on the off label use of DBT. By further investigating the off label use of DBT researchers may add to effective treatment options for a variety of diagnoses.

**Barriers to Social Worker Use of Bright Light Therapy as a Treatment for Non-Seasonal Unipolar Depression**

by Jean M. McSorley

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Sherri Schneider, MSW, LICSW; Jane McCampbell, MA, LMFT

The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers to social workers’ use of bright light therapy as a treatment modality for non-seasonal unipolar depression. Bright light therapy has demonstrated efficacy for non-seasonal depression, and offers advantages over conventional pharmacological treatment, yet it does not appear to be widely used within the social work community. Interviews with eight social workers in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas found that bright light is perceived positively, but primarily as a tool for seasonal affective disorder; the therapy has a low profile in the professional community and practitioners have significant gaps in their knowledge; there are difficulties with accessing the equipment; and there are practical difficulties with use of the equipment. Future research possibilities include exploring perceptions of clients, extending professional samples to include non-social work clinicians and those outside the Twin Cities area, and investigating reasons why this modality has a low profile at the community level.

**In Their Own Words: The Needs of Adoptive Parents of Special Needs Children**

by Fintan R. Moore, M.A.

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, PhD.
Committee Members: Ginny Blade; Helen Martin, MSW

Every adoptee, by definition, has endured the disruption of a primary relationship – regardless of the particular path towards adoption that she or he has followed. Adoptees live with ghosts and wounds of disrupted relationships throughout their whole lives. This paper explores the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of the adoptive parents of these children through an analysis of data.
collected by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) from 99 adoptive parents living in the state of Minnesota. The respondents adopted through public and private agencies and were located throughout the state. The adopted children came from foster care, from orphanages overseas, from infant safe-haven programs, or were the children of relatives. Fifty-seven percent of respondents adopted groups of siblings and eight-eight percent of the respondents adopted children living with disabilities, including Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and the life-long effects of early trauma. Adoptive parents reported difficulties finding help to meet their children’s unmet needs. Based on respondents’ statements, this paper concludes with calls for improvements in the provision of post-adoption services, including increased funding for the state’s adoption assistance program, enhanced adoption-competency training and certification of professional service providers, and a state-wide network of seasoned adoptive parents to support and inform adoptive families.

The Impact of HIV Education
by Mary Norris

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Maureen Wells, LSW; Michele Goddard, MSW, LICSW

Previous research has explored the different methods and approaches HIV education has taken in order to prevent new infection, however new infection rates in Minnesota have risen over the last two years, and increased thirteen percent in 2009 (Minnesota AIDS Project, 2010). Various prevention programs have achieved limited success in changing behaviors, and have cited difficulty in their ability to follow-up with participants over longer periods of time, thus making it difficult to evaluate the longevity of the intervention. (Eke, Mezoff, Duncan & Soglow, 2006; LaChausse, 2006; Lyles, Crepaz & Herbst, 2006; Maticka-Tyndale & Barnett, 2010; Riley, Baah-Odoom, 2010; Singh, Darroch, & Bankole, 2003; Yankah & Aggleton, 2008). This study examined the impact HIV education had on people ages eighteen to thirty-eight. Twenty-six participants responded to an online survey that asked about their HIV education, prejudices towards the HIV positive population, and HIV risk assessment. Descriptive statistics were run on the data to determine if there was any relationship between the variables. There was no relationship between the presence of bias, or risk assessment and HIV education. There was also no relationship between these variables and gender, race or sexual orientation. These results indicate some needed changes in HIV education and offer suggestions as to what schools can do to prepare their students to protect themselves against infection.

The Effectiveness of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy with Adolescents in Residential Treatment Centers
by Michelle L. O’Connell

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, Ph. D.
Committee Members: Alma Marquez, LGSW; Christina Brasel, BA

Studies indicate that one in ten children may have a serious emotional problem, and that one in five children have some sort of mental, behavioral, or emotional problem (“Statistics – Adolescent”, 2001). Suicidal ideations (SI) and self-injurious behaviors (SIB) are amongst those problems and are becoming more prevalent (Miller & Smith, 2008). Research has shown that dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) has been effective in reducing SI/SIB in adolescents. There are situations where outpatient services are not enough for adolescents with SI/SIB. (Little et al., 2010). This paper looks at DBT therapists, which work with adolescents, perspectives on the effectiveness of DBT when applied in residential settings. This research found that DBT can be effective in residential treatment centers if all of the staff is adequately trained. Residential treatment centers that adhere to the DBT model are few and far between. This research indicated that some of the reasons might be the high cost of DBT training, the insufficient amount of research available, and the use of DBT with adolescents being relatively new.

Do local, state and federal government programs affect the recovery process of persons diagnosed with serious persistent mental illness (SPMI)?

by April M. Olson

Research Chair: Karen Carlson, MSSW, LICSW PhD.
Committee Members: Andrew Thompson, MSW, LICSW; Mark Davis, MSW, LICSW

The following qualitative research study was conducted in attempt to get perspective on the views of how the system impacts recovery from serious persistent mental illness (SPMI) Although the literature is rich in describing the needs that this population demonstrates for assistance from the governmental programs that exist, the literature does not address whether there is a connection between system involvement and the unique recovery process of persons with serious persistent mental illness. Using a qualitative design, a survey tool was developed and conducted with eight volunteers who have been diagnosed with a serious persistent mental illness. The survey sought to explore the experiences of the individuals and whether their involvement with various local, state and federal government programs has affected their recovery process and in what ways. The data was then analyzed utilizing an open coding method to interpret the themes in attempt to increase insight on the subjective experience of how involvement in the governmental programs affects recovery in this population. The findings indicated that there is a high degree of involvement in government programs within this population of people and there is definitely an impact on recovery that is discussed in detail in the data analysis and discussion section of this research paper.

Exploring Core Competencies and Standards of Practice in the Wilderness Therapy Field

by Dana M. Olson

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, Ph. D, MSW, MPP, LISW
Wilderness therapy is an emerging field in mental health based services. Research about wilderness therapy demonstrates that it is an effective mental health intervention (Hill, 2007; Norton, 2010; Russell, 2003; Weston & Tinsley, 1999). However, research also shows that wilderness therapy programs often differ in structure, theoretical framework, and staff training and credentials (Rosol, 2000; Weston & Tinsley, 1999). The purpose of this research was to explore opinions about core competencies of wilderness therapists and current standards of practice in the field in order to explore whether there is a need for improved standardization between wilderness therapy programs. The researcher used a qualitative design and interviewed five participants who currently work in the wilderness therapy field and possess a graduate degree in a related field. The data was transcribed and coded for themes and was then applied to the literature. The findings indicate mixed responses about whether there is a need for improved standardization between programs. The participants seemed to agree that there is a need for some basic requirements but that standardization can take away from the impact and creativity of wilderness therapy programs. Instead, participants stated that improved collaboration between programs and professional organizations will help the field continue to advance as a viable mental health treatment option. Common core competencies that were cited include an ability to form a trusting relationship with clients, training in wilderness skills, knowledge about relevant counseling theories and human development, an understanding of chemical dependency, and training in how to work with people who have experienced trauma. Each participant stated their respective programs had both clinical and non-clinical staff. The programs differed in trip length, population served, and the amount of time clinical staff spent on the wilderness therapy trips. Each participant reported that staff members have on-going supervision with licensed therapists or clinical directors while on an expedition. Cost and risk management were cited as common challenges with wilderness therapy. These findings highlight the need for continued outcome research and improved collaboration between professional organizations in order to share research findings, improve best practices, and spread awareness to the public about wilderness therapy as an effective mental health treatment option.

A Qualitative Exploration of Adult Experiences with Sandplay Therapy
by Megan M. Olson

The research reported here examined the experiences of adults who completed a sandplay process in a therapeutic setting. Using a qualitative design, eight adults were interviewed who had experienced these types of techniques in their own therapeutic process. The data was analyzed using inductive and deductive approaches in categories were created from the data and then compared to the literature. The findings suggest that sandplay is an effective therapeutic method to use with adults as well as with children. By using the sand, miniatures, and other experiential kinds of therapy, the unconscious processes come into conscious awareness. This provides adults with an experience of increased awareness and sense of self integration. In a world where we operate on a conscious level most frequently, we need a way to access the unconscious aspects of
ourselves in order to acknowledge our needs and further increase our understanding of brain and body interactions.

The Pathway of Crime to Recidivism for Adult Female Offenders
by Anna Pederson

Historically, theories and research on criminality were developed from a male perspective. The staggering numbers of females involved with the criminal justice have been and continue to rise; women’s incarceration rate has tripled in the last ten years (Bloom 2006). Consequently, female offenders in the criminal justice system have become a misunderstood and often neglected population. This research project focuses attention on female offenders, their specific pathways to crime, and how to best work with female offenders to alleviate recidivism. Female offenders have specific needs in their work with recovery. This study specifically examines gender specific pathways to crime and solutions to recidivism by analyzing the experiences of nine professionals who work directly with this population. A qualitative data collection method was utilized and a total of nine professionals were interviewed. Their responses were organized into various themes, and analyzed for similarities and differences. The original intent of the research was to draw themes and similarities from the participants to support or contrast the literature. This was done successfully by highlighting themes presented by the participants. The findings support the need for gender-specific programming that addresses; trauma abuse and victimization, relationships, chemical dependency and mental illness, parental stress, employment and socioeconomic status, context of crime, and finally reducing recidivism through community programming. The implications for social work practice, policy, and research are discussed including suggestions for further research, micro level implications, and mezzo level implications.

Exploring Differing Acculturation Levels between Parents and Adolescents
by Marina Perez

This research project is designed to look at the perspectives of Latino parents: exploring the parent adolescent relationship that emerges as a result of differing acculturation levels between parent and adolescent and the parental experience of adolescent development. This exploratory study is designed to identify descriptive data through a survey designed to allow for the self-reporting of Latino parents to determine parental and adolescent acculturation levels. The interview used is centered on empirically sound categories to measure levels of acculturation such as: identified language usage, media behavior, ties to people in country of origin, value expressions, interpersonal network composition, parental views of acculturation and assimilation.
This qualitative study and individual interviews are meant to help researchers understand issues of acculturation and how such issues pertain to parent-child relationships as related by the parents.

Perceptions of Adoptive and Foster Parents on Improving Outcomes for Children with Reactive Attachment Disorder
by Heidi J. Peterson

Research Chair: Annette Samanchin-Jones, Ph.D. candidate
Committee Members: Teresa George, MS, LICSW; Shannon Reiner, MS, LGSW

Attachment impacts people’s abilities to build trust and relate to others throughout their lifespan. The purpose of this project was to learn from adoptive and foster parents about their placement and therapeutic experiences with their children diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder. Using a qualitative design, eight parents were interviewed regarding the placement of the children in their home, their child’s behaviors and treatment obtained for their child’s attachment related issues. The interview guide was informed by attachment theory. A behavior rating scale was used titled “Symptom Checklist” from the attachment work of Orlans and Levy (2005). The findings indicated that the parents felt that they did not receive enough information regarding their child’s trauma and abuse history at the time of placement. Parents indicated that foster and adoptive parents need attachment training prior to having a child with attachment issues placed with them. The parents also reported that their child’s behaviors varied contingent on the length of time they resided with their adoptive or foster parents and the child’s trauma experience. Many of the children of the participants were diagnosed with co-morbid disorders. Parents reported more significant reductions in acting out behaviors when attachment trained therapists were utilized for treatment.

The Effects of Experiencing a Separation from a Caregiver among Preschool-aged Children Experiencing Homelessness: Resilient Status and Developmental Competence Outcomes
by John Peterson

Research Chair: Sheila Brommel, MSW, LISW
Committee Members: Ann Masten, Ph.D.; Keimi Umezu, MSW

Peer relationship competence, emotional competence, and academic functioning outcomes were examined among preschool-aged homeless children who had experienced a past separation from a primary caregiver. 137 children were gathered from existing data among children considered to be homeless and highly mobile and ultimately 29 children were identified to have experienced a past separation from a primary caregiver. Data were analyzed using both person focused and variable focused approaches. Children who had experienced a separation were found to have higher internalizing symptoms when controlling for cumulative risk and adversity. The same children were found to have also experienced higher levels of cumulative risk. This study underscored the importance of examining separations in early life by revealing the rates of separation and also revealing the effects of such an experience. The findings from the study will help inform clinicians and others about where to find children who have experienced early life separations and also help those looking to prevent the negative effects of experiencing a separation begin to formulate ways to intervene earlier to promote more successful outcomes.
Relapse Prevention in Short Term Residential Treatment
by Susan R. Peterson

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Jane Hurley Johncox, MSW, LICSW; DeDe Van Slyke, PsyD, LPCC

This qualitative research study examines clinicians’ and mental health workers’ perceptions on relapse prevention in short term residential treatment. Ten interviews were conducted. Eight themes were then identified from the participants’ responses to interview questions by using a phenomenological approach: causes of mental health relapse, reasons for relapse, importance of support, self acceptance of mental illness, defining recovery, staff support, time, and suggestions for relapse prevention.
Sub-themes included clinician perceptions, mental health worker perceptions, shared perceptions, medication, stress, drug and alcohol use, clinician suggestions and mental health worker suggestions. These findings support findings from previous literature on relapse prevention. Implications for social work practice and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

First Time Motherhood for Women 35 Years of Age and Older: An Exploratory Study
by Sharon Pfeil-Dexheimer

Research Chair: Al Holloway, PhD.
Committee Members: Lynn Ericson Starr, MSW, LICSW; Kate Cox, MSW, LGSW

An increase in education, career opportunities and ready access to contraceptives are a few of the influences on the growing number of women experiencing motherhood later in life. This qualitative research study examines the unique perceptions and experiences of women transitioning into first time motherhood at 35 years of age or older. A semi-structured interview with ten women was conducted to collect the data for this study. Using a descriptive method for data analysis in conjunction with a reliability procedure, themes in the participants’ responses were indentified. The women in this study perceived a loss of independence, feeling unprepared and the need for self care perceived as major areas of importance. Additionally, balancing child care and career was also found to be of concern to the women in the study. Finally, the women in this study did not perceive themselves to be high risk or feel labeled as “old moms”. The voices of these ten mothers speak to the importance of awareness to the unique emotional and physical needs of this growing subset of mothers.
**Positive Affect & Compassion Fatigue in Huntington’s Disease Caregivers**

by Christopher Poyzer

Research Chair: Annette Semanchin-Jones, MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Lynda Vistad, MSW, LCSW; Kathy Caron, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of Huntington’s caregiver positive affect and compassion fatigue. Twenty-nine caregivers, who were spouses or partners of persons living with Huntington’s disease, participated by completing a survey, which includes scales that measured positive affect and compassion fatigue. Positive Affect was measured by using the PANAS (Watson, 1988) and compassion fatigue was measured by modifying the ProQOL, version 5 (Stamm, 2009) to reflect Huntington’s disease caregivers experience. Information was gathered on caregivers in terms of gender, income, years of diagnosis, hours per day caregiving, psychiatric symptoms (of HD spouse or partner), professional and familiar supports systems, health problems and other instrumental variables. Correlations were analyzed between Positive Affect, Negative Affect and the compassion fatigue sub-scales of Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress. Huntington’s disease caregivers displayed high levels of secondary traumatic stress, which also had a moderate negative correlation with positive affect. Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress that were statistically significant were “being afraid of what the future entails”, and symptoms of avoidance, pre-occupation, depression, and experiencing their loved ones stress. Further research might explore to what extent HD caregivers actually experience traumatic stress. Qualitative methodology might assist in adding substance to these findings.

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**The Benefits of Harm Reduction for Chronic Alcoholism: A Perspective of Those Living in Wet Housing**

by Rebecca Prahl

Research Chair: Colin Hollidge, Ph.D
Members: Marcie Johnson, MSW, LICSW; Diane Bauer, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of residents living in wet housing regarding the benefits of using a harm reduction approach for chronic alcoholism. By solely concentrating on the residents’ experiences, this qualitative study puts a voice to the unique experience of those living in wet housing. Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents living at Anishinabe Wakiagun, a wet house in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The purpose was to elicit the opinion of participants’ experience with harm reduction and what they feel has been beneficial about using the harm reduction approach to their chronic alcoholism. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed and common themes were found in the transcriptions. Several themes found within the data were; consequences to alcoholism, reduction of harm to individual and society, benefits of living in wet housing, challenges of living in wet housing, and wanting to give back to others.
Burnout in Mental Health Workers
by Ashley E. Pratt

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, MSW, Ph.D.
Committee Members: May Larson, MSW, LICSW; Andrea Rude, MA, LAMFT

The purpose of this research study was to explore the prevalence of burnout among mental health workers and their beliefs on burnout prevention. The sample population consisted of employees from one Midwestern organization who work with client diagnosed with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness. Both quantitative and qualitative methodology was used, 34 employees participated in the survey while seven participated in the interviews. Based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory, respondents indicated a high level of emotional exhaustion, a high level of depersonalization, and a low level of personal accomplishment. The findings also indicated that respondents felt that burnout prevention happens at three different levels: an organizational level, a supervisory level, and at a personal level.

For practitioners in the mental health field to maintain a healthy work life balance and be effective with clients, burnout should be an element that’s heavily considered by organizational policy makers. With these findings this particular agency can choose to begin looking at ways to highlight the things that participants already find helpful such as trainings, PTO, and certain health benefits, and those that need to be improved, such education around the normalization and symptoms of burnout.

Experiences of Older Foster Youth in Equine Assisted Therapy: The Clinician’s Perspective
by Laura Rauenhorst

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, MSW, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Molly DePrekel, MA, LP; Michelle Chalmers, MSW, LISW

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of equine assisted therapy as an alternative treatment modality in providing therapeutic support to older foster youth. The author has become aware of many programs throughout the country providing this specific modality for work with this population. However, no research has been conducted to determine its effectiveness. Using a qualitative study, four mental health professionals that have provided equine assisted therapy to older foster youth were interviewed concerning the specific benefits and challenges in providing this therapeutic modality to foster youth. After compiling the data, themes were developed using inductive and deductive analysis. The relational components of this work were highlighted in discussions of social skill building as well as providing a reparative relational experience. The rhythmic movements of the horse were also emphasized in providing an opportunity for neurobiological impacts. As foster youth often struggle with trusting adults, developing healthy relationships and responses to traumatic experiences, equine assisted therapy was presented as an alternative modality for psychotherapy that allows foster youth the opportunity for relational experiences.
The Decline of Residential Treatment Services in Children’s Mental Health
by Kathryn L. Reaney

Research Chair: Lance T. Peterson, LICSW, PhD
Committee Members: Krista M. Nelson, LICSW, LMFT; Amy M. Kerber, MSW, LGSW

This study looked at the perspectives of children’s mental health providers on the impact of the decline of residential treatment services on the continuum of care for children’s mental health. Specifically, it looked at the perspectives of children’s mental health providers on the necessity of residential treatment services, perception of a gap in services, and whether other services existed that were adequate in number and could appropriately address the needs of children with severe emotional and behavioral issues. This study also looked at professionals’ opinions regarding client case characteristics that might indicate the need for residential treatment services such as issues of safety, overall mental health issues, and patterns of difficulties in a family-like setting. The research design for this study was exploratory survey research with quantitative data analysis, as well as, some basic qualitative analysis. Members of Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health were invited to participate in this study and responses were filtered for their fit with the desired sample of children’s mental health providers. Findings suggested that the majority of the 76 participants in the study strongly endorsed the continued need for residential treatment services and were concerned about a detrimental gap in services if residential treatment services should continue to decline. Both severe mental health issues and behaviors that threatened the safety of the child or others were supported by participants as potential characteristics that might indicate the need for placement in a residential treatment setting. However, findings indicated more support for treatment foster care settings given the client case characteristic of problems in a family-like setting. These findings supported the continued necessity of residential treatment services in the continuum of care and the importance of maintaining an adequate continuum of services to meet client need.

The Role of Trauma in the Etiology of Hoarding
by Heidi R. Rimpila

Research Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, MSW, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Julie Gagne, MSW, LICSW; Andrea Aase

The purpose of this study was to expand the body of knowledge of the role trauma may play in the etiology of hoarding and whether addressing previous traumas could be an effective component of treatment for this disorder. For this study, two interviews were conducted with mental health professionals who have experience working with people who hoard compulsively. Semi-structured interviews were used in these interviews. Differing views emerged among the participants about the role trauma has in the development of hoarding and the benefits of addressing previous traumas in treatment for hoarders. Both participants said they saw evidence of trauma in the lives of people who hoard compulsively; the second participant noted, however, that the trauma he saw in the lives of people who hoard compulsively was no different than any other population he has worked with.
The first participant said that he thought addressing previous traumas would be an effective component for the treatment of compulsive hoarding. The second participant said that addressing previous traumas would not be an effective component of treatment. One thing that emerged in the analysis of the data was the different theoretical backgrounds of the therapists and the role this may have played in their perspectives. Further research in exploring previous traumas in the lives of compulsive hoarders and the effects of treating these traumas is needed to expand the body of knowledge about the effectiveness of addressing trauma as part of treatment for this disorder.

An Exploratory Study of Recent MSW Graduates’ Exposure to Neurobiological Curricula and Self-Ratings of Preparedness to Practice with Clinical Populations
by Deborah M. Ringwelski

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Faith Jasperson, MSW, LICSW; Barbara Pierson, MSW, LICSW

Social work literature increasingly includes research findings from neuroscience that are informing diagnosis, intervention, and prevention strategies in the mental health field. This scientific evidence base should inform the type of curriculum and training that graduate social work students experience in their MSW program prior to entering advanced practice settings. This exploratory study surveyed 150 recent graduates licensed at the LGSW level to investigate the type of MSW coursework and early practice training experiences they received across three neurobiological content areas identified in the literature as fundamental in clinical social work. Exposure to neurobiological curriculum was found to be lacking for a large number of MSW students and general rates of exposure were not found to differ between clinically vs. non-clinically oriented practitioners. Respondents’ self-ratings of preparedness to integrate neurobiological content into their practice, as measured by the Preparedness to Practice Scale, yielded non-significant differences between the clinically oriented respondents and 2 of the 3 non-clinically focused groups. This study supports the need to include more neurobiological curricula in advanced social work programs especially for those students entering a clinical practice setting.

Implementation of the 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
by Stacy A. Rivers

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD, LISW
Committee Members: Nicole Hachfeld, MSW, LGSW; Ann E. Bailey, M.A.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was originally developed as a work of entitlement legislation meant to erode barriers for students with disabilities in accessing a free, appropriate public education. This research sought to understand how specific practices of IDEA have been implemented since the act’s reauthorization in 2004. A case study of a kindergarten through twelfth grade school district made use of interview schedules and document review in order
to analyze this question. The results of this research highlighted continued areas of need in terms of lack of interventions services for students suspected of disabilities, and inadequate communication and time burdens for staff. Successful areas of implementation included mandates pertaining to students who qualify for special education services and decline of stigma associated with special education labels.

**Parent Attitudes toward Elementary School Attendance: Effects on Academic and Social Development**
by Holly W. Reinsmoen

Research Chair: Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D, LICSW
Committee Members: Lyla Peterson, LICSW; Ryan Strack, MSW, LGSW

This quantitative study focused on parent attitudes towards elementary school attendance and its effects on academic and social development. The hypotheses examined were whether or not there was a relationship between school attendance and parent’s belief in good grades and whether or not there was a relationship between school attendance and parent’s belief that important social skills are learned at school. There were 18 participants included in this study, all of whom were parents and/or guardians of children currently enrolled in elementary school (grades K-5). Participants were sampled from a public elementary school (grades K-5) in an urban area in the Midwestern part of the United States. A survey was used to collect the data for this study. Two chi-square analyses were used to analyze the data. Valid chi-square analyses could not be performed due to the small sample size, thus, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. The implications for social work practice include continued education for parents and school staff regarding the importance of parent involvement in children’s education, continued research and implementation of programs to address school absenteeism and truancy and continued research to examine the perceptions of the effects of school attendance on academic and social development.

**Sustained Relationships between Foster Parents and Foster Children**
*A Qualitative Case Study*
by Gayle M. Robinson

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D.
Research Committee: Rebecca Arsenault, MSW, LICSW; Trudy Eisenhauer, LSW

This research explores sustained relationships between foster parents and foster children who have transitioned out of care. It reports findings from a qualitative case study of two foster parents, five of their foster children, a biological parent, and a social worker about the elements of on-going relationships. The generally poor outcomes of youth exiting care are acknowledged and the protective factors of stability, permanency and early support during and after care are highlighted. Data was collected by interviews with the participants about insights into their experiences as children and what their life as an adult is like after being involved in foster care. Key themes that emerged in the
School Social Workers’ and Teachers’ Beliefs Concerning Alternative Treatments for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
by Katherine A. Rogers

Research Chair: Kendra J. Garrett, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Cheryl A. Cowan, LICSW; Cinda K. Mowers, LICSW

The National Alliance for Mental Illness (2010) has estimated that on average at least one child in every U.S. classroom has ADHD, with three to seven percent of school-aged children affected. The present study was designed to examine the relationship between profession and beliefs concerning alternative treatments for ADHD. Eighty-three teachers and 18 school social workers from the Minneapolis area were surveyed, for a total of 111 participants. The research survey contained 29 questions focusing on ADHD, intervention methods and profession. Findings suggest that both professions are comfortable implementing school-based interventions. In addition, a higher percentage of school social workers than teachers rated stimulant medications as over-prescribed and ADHD as over-diagnosed. The present study found that time, support, consistency and class size were the four most common difficulties reported by teachers and school social workers when attempting to implement a classroom intervention. Furthermore, findings suggest the importance of finding easy, yet successful interventions for teachers to utilize, especially for those who are managing a larger classroom. Implications of the study indicate the importance for school social workers to consult and support school staff regarding ADHD and effective interventions.

Grief and Loss Experiences of Family Caregivers of Elders with Dementia
by Beth D. Rollie

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, Ph.D., MSW,LISW
Committee Members: Ted Bowman, MDiv; Therese Buckley, MSW, LISW

Caregivers of a family member with progressive dementia experience many losses for which they grieve throughout the course of their caregiving experiences. This study explores and describes issues of grief and loss with two types of informal family caregivers: spousal caregivers and adult child caregivers, by comparing and contrasting their perceptions and experiences. Using mixed methods of data collection to measure the intensity of grief and record the caregiving experiences of five family caregiver units, this study indicates that caregiving spouses tend to have higher levels of grief than adult child caregivers, and that each caregiver perceives and approaches the caregiving situation in different ways. While both types of caregivers experience loss and grief, the losses are not necessarily the same nor are their grief issues experienced the same way. Implications for social
workers include understanding these differing needs, so that interventions and support are adjusted to accommodate the needs of caregiver spouses and adult child caregivers.

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**Child Maltreatment as a Pathway to ADHD: A Possible Association Between Disorganized Attachment and Symptoms of Inattention and Hyperactivity**

by Annette Ruedenberg

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, MSW, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Jane Yank, MSW, PhD., LICSW; Scott Harman, MSW, LICSW

This study was accomplished using secondary analysis of the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development data. Longitudinal data of 852 participants was utilized to examine a possible relationship between maltreatment and ADHD. Utilizing attachment classifications determined by the Strange Situation at 15 months, children with a disorganized attachment classification were used to represent maltreated children and compared to children with a secure attachment representing a normative sample. Scores on the Achenbach Teacher Report Form (TRF) Attention Problems Scale were used as a variable to measure tendencies toward ADHD. Boys and girls were analyzed separately using an one-way ANOVA to compare means of both disorganized and secure attachment categories on scores on the TRF Attention Problems Scale. Results revealed no significant difference between disorganized and secure attachment groups on the TRF Attention Problems Scale scores in both genders. However, a significant difference was found between avoidant attachment and both the secure attachment and the resistant attachment groups in girls. The avoidant attachment group was subsequently considered for its association with maltreatment and possible implications for a relationship between maltreatment and ADHD in girls.

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**Social Skills Group Work and its Effect on Students with ADHD**

by Katie M. Rutledge

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Denise Herrmann, DNP, RN, LSN, CNP, FNASN; Dan Porter, LICSW

Over the past three decades in the United States, behavioral and learning disorders have emerged as major chronic conditions affecting the development of school-aged children and adolescents (Pastor & Reuben, 2008). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has become one of the most prevalent, as 10% of children ages 4 to 17 have been diagnosed in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health, 2010). ADHD is characterized in children by behaviors such as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, and is often a barrier to success in relationships and academic work. Social skills group work is one of the most prominent interventions for students with ADHD and stresses the importance of learned social skills and relationship-building. Transferring these skills to other situations, like the general education classroom, is a goal for many social skills groups. The purpose of this research was to further explore whether classroom teachers believe
social skills groups are effective interventions for improving the academics and social skills of students with ADHD, and how students with ADHD generalize their learned social skills from small group work to the classroom. A cross-sectional written survey with mixed methods was administered online to a random selection of 3rd-5th grade general education classroom teachers in outer-ring suburbs. The researcher sent 87 surveys, and 16 were returned completed. While the majority of the respondents felt that medication was the most commonly used intervention and had the most positive impact on the learning of students with ADHD, they felt that social skills group work most positively impacted the students’ peer relationships. Findings of this research indicate that classroom teachers are favorable of social skills groups, and agree that they are an effective intervention in work with students with ADHD.

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**The Effects of Self-Compassion on Depression**

by Christine Sande

Research Chair: Michael Chovanec, MSW, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Stacy Husebo, MSW, LICSW; Nicole Majerle, MSW, LGSW

Depression has become widespread over the past several decades, developing into a major cause of disability in the United States. Many interventions have been used with depression, with varying levels of success. In recent years, self-compassion has emerged from the mindfulness literature as a promising new intervention for anxiety, self-criticism, and depression. Self-compassion entails being kind toward oneself in instances of pain or failure; perceiving one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience; and holding painful thoughts and feelings in mindful awareness. The purpose of this study is to explore self-compassion qualitatively as an intervention for depression. Eight licensed mental health professionals who use self-compassion as an intervention were contacted. Two hour-long interviews were completed with an interview schedule designed by the researcher and committee. Both respondents had formal training in mindfulness and self-compassion, and over fifteen years experience in using self-compassion as an intervention with depressed clients. The findings indicate that using self-compassion as an intervention with depressed clients’ results in clients reaching out for additional help from the community. In addition, it was found that professionals who use self-compassion as an intervention should have a self-compassion practice of their own for successful results with clients.

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**The Experiences of Adult Siblings of Persons with Developmental Disabilities**

by Heidi Scheffler

Research Chair: Valandra, MBA, MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Robin Wingo, MSW, LISW; Christina Geng, BSW, LSW

This qualitative study explored the experiences of adult siblings of persons with developmental disabilities. Interviews were completed with seven adult siblings to better understand the sibling relationship, the adult siblings’ psychosocial outcomes, their involvement in and expectations for their siblings’ future, and their need for information and support in promoting issues important to
them and their families. The objective of the study was to gain insight into the siblings’ experiences in order to learn ways for social workers and professionals alike to be more effective in supporting these siblings. The content of the interviews were analyzed to identify categories and subsequent themes expressed by the participants. The findings indicated that these siblings feel a strong sense of responsibility for their sibling, largely based on the closeness they feel towards their sibling with a disability and the influence of their familial systems. Woven into the sibling relationship are the positive impacts on the adult siblings’ personality characteristics, the various ways in which they cope, and their involvement, attitudes, and expectations for the future. The findings also present several implications that can be taken from this study, including the need for education for social workers and other professionals working with adult siblings, their parents, and their brothers and sisters with disabilities, and the adult siblings’ needs for additional information, support, and resources.

Adolescents with Chronic Illness: The Pediatric Social Workers’ Role in Addressing Medical Treatment Adherence
by Jenna M. Schley

Research Chair: Valandra, MSW, ABD
Committee Members: Lillian Bauman, MSW, LICSW; Ann Paulsen, MA

This qualitative study focused on identifying the contributing factors to treatment non-adherence among adolescents diagnosed with a chronic illness. This study also identified the specific roles of the pediatric social worker in addressing the psychosocial barriers associated with non-adherence issues among adolescents and their families. Nine pediatric social workers participated in this study. Face-to-face or telephone interviews were done with participants determining their role in addressing adherence issues with adolescents and the barriers associated with non-adherence. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. The eleven major themes that emerged from the findings include: (1) Adolescent brain development and cognitive processes (2) Adolescents desire for independence as barrier to adherence (3) Social influence and peer support as factors associated with adherence to treatment (4) Chronically ill adolescent’s desire for normalcy (5) A balance of parental involvement (6) Adolescent’s sense of control over treatment (7) Impact culture has on adherence (8) Socioeconomic status and ability to adhere to treatment (9) Pediatric social workers role in addressing adherence issues: bigger picture approach (10) Pediatric social workers play a major role in addressing issues if non-adherence (11) Education needed for health care providers regarding the roles of pediatric social workers. Implications for social work practice include the importance of understanding adolescent development and the role it has on adherence, the need for assessment for cultural considerations regarding adherence issues, and the need to encourage a balance of parental involvement with adolescents treatment. Lastly, the need for future education and advocacy on the roles of pediatric social workers in addressing non-adherence to medical treatment among adolescents and their families is recommended.
Care for Service Members and Their Families: Social Workers’ Perspectives
by Jamie Schmitz

Research Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, MSSW, Ph. D., LISW
Committee Members: Kari Fletcher, ABD, MSW, LICSW; David Holewinski, LICSW, CBIS

The presence of service members and their families seeking services in the community is increasing. The purpose of this study was to further our understanding of service members and their families seeking mental health services in the community, increase awareness of how social workers are serving this population and to identify what social workers want to know more about working with service members and their families in the community. Using a quantitative design, a random sample of 200 social workers throughout the state of Minnesota were surveyed to gain their perspectives of working with this population. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics forming two groups: LGSW and LICSW social workers to compare their responses. Among several presenting concerns, adjustment related concerns, PTSD, depression, anxiety and substance use disorders were among some of the concerns of service members recognized by the participants. Adjustment, parenting and financial related concerns and anxiety were just a few of the concerns among family members recognized by the participants. When comparing participants who had experience and those who had no experience working with service members, there was a significant difference in level of confidence in those who worked with a service member. In regard to confidence levels, a majority of social workers rated themselves as somewhat confident when working with service members and their families. The knowledge gained from this research reiterates the need for social workers to continue to educate themselves, other professionals and community members about the unique needs of this population and to continue to conduct research on this population.

Group Reminiscence Therapy and Quality of Life of Older Adults
by Jessica Schmitz

Research Chair: Katharine Hill, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Joan Stauffer, LICSW; Rajean P. Moone, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how professionals view the association between older adults’ participation in reminiscence therapy groups and the participants’ quality of life. Reminiscence group therapy in this study refers to a closed-group activity in which participants share personal past experiences with each other (Chao et al., 2006). Good quality of life for older adults in this study refers to an average or above average level of self-esteem, interest in life (socially active), coping skills, life satisfaction, well-being, and mood. This exploratory study was done by gathering qualitative data using semi-structured interviews. The five professionals interviewed were all women that were licensed independent clinical social workers and were employed at Minneapolis/St. Paul agencies that provide services to older adults. These participants were involved with running at least two groups of reminiscence therapy in their professional experience. The findings from the data in this study showed the major benefits of group reminiscence therapy to be increased: socialization, social skills, ability in dealing with losses, ability to reframe life.
experiences, pleasure, and self-esteem. Future research may be needed to understand why group reminiscence therapy is not being used more frequently, how to spread the word on effective interventions, like group reminiscence therapy, to more social workers and how to fund such interventions.

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**Body-oriented psychotherapy as a treatment for trauma**
by Kristy Schutt

Research committee: Sarah Johnston, MSW; Stacy Husebo, LICSW
Chair: Mari Ann Graham, LISW, Ph.D.

Body-Oriented psychotherapy (BOP) is distinct in that it regards the union of the mind and the body as imperative in treatment of mental health. BOP maintains a solid theoretical base and recognizes the complex interactions between the mind and the body. Within the field of psychotherapy, BOP contains a large amount of literature. Due to the emerging research on the effects of trauma on the body, further research on BOP as a modality for trauma symptoms is warranted. Given the lack of qualitative research on BOP, this study examines the views that body-oriented clinicians have on BOP as a treatment for trauma. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from eight body-oriented clinicians. Data was analyzed and coded for themes, through which six themes emerged: importance of respect, preparation, use of BOP for treating trauma, memories held in body, contraindications, and effects on clients. The findings showed that BOP is an effective modality for healing the wounds from trauma. Overall, the findings in this study are consistent with those in the literature. Implications of this study emphasize the need for further BOP research in the treatment of trauma. Secondly, social workers and educational programs need to be open to accept BOP as an alternative, holistic modality for clients who have trauma wounds.

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**Relationship of Child Care Provider Demographics and Attitudes Regarding Attachment**
by Jill Schweisthal

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Christa Mitchell, MSW; Judith Benson

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes child care providers have regarding attachment styles of children in their care. Using a quantitative design, 41 participants responded to a survey about their attitudes about attachment regarding the children in their care. Data was analyzed through conducting t-tests, using Minitab, to determine if there was a relationship between various demographics of respondents and their attitudes regarding attachment. The findings indicated no statistically significant differences between the various demographics of child care providers and their attitudes regarding attachment. These findings both support and challenge various literature regarding the impact of child care on attachment styles that
children develop. This study suggests impact on social welfare policy regarding the need for licensed child care policies related to the numbers of children in care. It also suggests the need for training regarding attachment for providers to encourage and support the development of healthy relationships with children thus mitigating potential negative effects of child care exposure.

**Mindfulness and Self-Compassion: Exploring the Relationship with Clinical Social Workers’ Well-Being**
by Matt Sebold

Research Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, MSSW, Ph. D., LISW  
Committee Members: Merra Young, MSW, LICSW, LMFT; Nicole Majerle, MSW, LGSW

Mindfulness-based therapeutic programs have become well-established remedies for a wide array of mental health issues. A related concept, self-compassion, has also been shown to be related to positive psychological functioning. This study suggests that these practices can be used by social workers and mental health professionals both in their therapeutic programs for clients, and also as valuable elements of their own self-care practices to reduce stress and enhance well-being. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between levels of mindfulness, self-compassion, and well-being among clinical social workers, in order to explore the value of mindfulness and self-compassion as self-care practices to enhance well-being. A sample of 134 clinical social workers in Minnesota were invited to participate in an online survey, which consisted of standardized measures of mindfulness, self-compassion, and three components of well-being – life satisfaction, flourishing, and the balance of positive and negative emotions. Of those invited to participate, 50 (76% female, 24% male) completed the survey, for a response rate of 37%. Both mindfulness and self-compassion were found to have strong correlations to all measures of well-being. Individuals who scored higher on the mindfulness and self-compassion measures reported feeling more satisfied with their lives, showed higher levels of flourishing, and experienced more frequent positive emotions and fewer negative emotions, when compared to individuals who scored lower on these scales. The results support a growing body of literature which promotes training in mindfulness and self-compassion for mental health professionals in order to enhance their functioning and therefore improve therapeutic efficacy.

**Effects of Emotional Vulnerability and Caregiver Invalidation on Eating Disorder Symptomatology**
by Stacy A. Seiberlich

Research Chair: Jessica Toft, Ph.D., LISW  
Committee Members: Katy Christensen, Psy.D., L.P.; Heather Gunderson, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of the study is to test the theory behind an increasingly popular form of eating disorder treatment, Dialectical Behavior Therapy. The theory hypothesizes that some mental health
disorders, such as eating disorders, result from an interaction between an emotionally vulnerable personality disposition and an invalidating environment during childhood. Therefore, it was the goal of this study to explore the association between emotional vulnerability and caregiver invalidation in childhood and the probability of developing an eating disorder. Twenty-six female college students completed an online survey that consisted of the SCOFF Questionnaire, the Emotional Vulnerability-Child Scale, and the Socialization of Emotion Scale. A surprising 45% of participants reported a high probability of having an eating disorder. Participants’ emotional vulnerability scores were positively associated with their probability of having an eating disorder, although these results were not statistically significant. There appeared to be no association between participants’ experiences of invalidation in childhood and their likelihood of developing an eating disorder. However, the data suggests that it was the lack of validating responses, not the presence of invalidating responses that may have acted as the variable factor in this study. Future research utilizing larger sample sizes, more diversity among participants, and a focus on the presence of both validation and invalidation during childhood is suggested.

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**Human Trafficking: Youth and the Needs of our Community**  
by Jenna Senger

Research Chair: Karen Carlson, LICSW Ph.D.  
Committee Members: Michelle Grey, MSW; Heather Robinson

Human trafficking is acknowledged internationally as a crime and affects people of all ages all over the world. This research focuses on the youth trafficked in Minnesota, specifically within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Even though human trafficking has been a crime for many years, the knowledge of, the legislation against and the services for are slowly evolving. The current research interviewed seven professionals who have experience with sexual trafficking in the metro. Each of these professionals explored services available as well as barriers to successful intervention for victims of sexual trafficking. This research was designed to bring awareness to what is available as well as what is missing.

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**Social Workers’ Perceptions of Adoptions by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Questioning (LGBQ) Families**  
by Sarah R. Shafer

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW  
Committee Members: Suzanne Habedank, MSW, LGSW; Carey Winkler, MSW, LICSW

The purpose of this study was to explore adoption social workers’ level of acceptance of LGBQ parenting and their beliefs about the evaluation and support needs for this population. This study examined how adoption social workers’ primary and secondary socialization factors relate to beliefs and values in regards to adoption by LGBQ-led families. This study also considered larger macro-level influences on adoption social workers’ beliefs and values, all of which guide the evaluation of
prospective LGBQ adoptive families. This study used a combination of three theories as a conceptual framework to understand our social world: social constructionism, ecological, and minority stress. Data was gathered from 61 social workers from 30 adoption agencies (20 private and 10 public) in the eleven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. The findings revealed some primary and secondary socialization factors (race / ethnicity, family of origin religious orthodoxy / spirituality, gender, level of social work education, and years of professional adoption experience) that significantly impact social workers’ beliefs and values related to adoption by LGBQ-led families. Implications for social work practice, policy, research, and education are discussed.

Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support Groups: A Caregiver’s Perspective
by Heidi A. Sklenar

Research Chair: Kendra Garrett, Ph. D.
Committee Members: Becky Ahlstrom, RN, MSN, CNP; Jeanne Wren Schuller, MSW, LGSW

Alzheimer’s disease is one of the most debilitating and unpredictable diseases to date. The diagnosis of this disease is not only devastating to the affected individual, but also to those who care for those with Alzheimer’s disease. The purpose of this project was to explore the caregiver’s perspective of caregiver support groups and how these groups impacted the process of caring for those with Alzheimer’s disease. Using a qualitative design, 14 participants from the Minnesota-Dakotas Alzheimer’s Association completed surveys regarding their experiences in caregiver support groups. Data was analyzed and organized by themes based on the participants’ responses. The findings indicated that most participants experienced an environment of support, understanding, and helpful resources as they navigated through the caregiving experience. Additionally, participants expressed how the support groups have helped with feelings of grief, loss, and depression. These findings support the need for further research in the area of caregiver support groups and point to the need for continued efforts to provide these groups in our communities.

Multiracial Adolescent’s Well-being: Multiracial Adolescent’s Have a Voice
by Rochelle M. Smith

Research Chair: Dr. Colin Hollidge
Committee Members: Cristina Combs, LICSW; Liz Konkler: LGSW

Adolescence is already a complicated stage in one’s life but adding the variable of being multiracial adds more complexity to an adolescent’s well-being. The purpose of this retrospective study is to explore how the variable of being multiracial affects adolescent’s well-being. In this study well-being is defined as health, happiness, and sense of belonging. This retrospective study explored adult women 20-22 years old. Using a qualitative design, three voluntary participants who have parents of two or more different races were interviewed regarding how their well-being was influenced by society, their peers, parents, and school. Data was analyzed using deductive and inductive approaches in which categories were developed from the responses and linked to previous research.
literature. The findings indicated that the participant’s well-being has been influenced by their peers, parents, in school and society. How monoracial individuals defined and interacted with the participants was a significant impact on their well-being. In addition, discrimination was experienced by the participant’s monoracial peers, parents, extended family, in society and in the schools. These findings supported other research that has been conducted on the experiences of multiracial adolescents in society. Some implications that may need to be considered would be that this study only consisted of three women; however, this study has enough depth for social workers to be more sensitive and aware of the need to enable, empower, and advocate for equality among adolescents who suffer due to being multiracial.

The Help-Seeking Experiences of Metro Area Somali-American Refugees Encountering Distress
by Katherine Schuster Stattmiller

Research Chair: Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Ahmed I. Yusuf, MPA; David Schuchman, MSW, LICSW

Minnesota is home to the United States’ largest Somali refugee population (Minnesota’s Somali Community, 2002). Refugee populations have been found to both experience stress at higher rates and utilize health care services at lower rates than the general population. Somali-Americans experience many barriers when seeking helping services and an investigation of existing research showed that little is known about the help-seeking experiences of Somali-Minnesotans encountering distress. This study examines the data from qualitative interviews with six Somali-Minnesotans about their experiences with pre- and post-migration distress; personal coping strategies; beliefs about and experiences with seeking various services, as well as their opinions about the outcomes of these help-seeking experiences. The themes that emerged from the data suggest that many significant sources of post-migration distress originate from lack of access to resources and isolation. The data also suggests that a large amount of coping and recovery happen within the Somali-American communities social support network, and that intra-community social supports serve to help Somali-Americans cope with and overcome resettlement barriers and distress. The implications of this research may be used to guide social work professionals in the development of resettlement services and mental health treatment programming.

Native American Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: A Social Workers’ Perspective
by Bobi L. Spaeth

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Larry Burd, Ph.D.; John Dick, LICSW

Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative designs, this study investigated the existing placement numbers for Native American children entering the Fetal Alcohol Program and the factors
contributing to these placements. The participants’ included eleven child welfare social workers’ from one Minnesota tribe who varied in sex, race, job duties, and length of experience. A semi-standardized interview was conducted with each participant. Children from infancy to seven years were found to experience higher rates of multiple placements. This study utilized two theoretical frameworks to examine the findings: ecological and biophysical systems theory. The basic premise behind the ecological model is that healthy people build healthy communities and that this is dependent on the availability of resources and supports. In Native American communities, the barriers to resources are astronomical and the supports within families’ are limited due to the impact that racism, colonialism and discrimination has had on the culture.

From the biophysical perspective, Native American children with special needs face even greater challenges beginning at birth that are often associated with neurocognitive and behavioral deficits. The impact of these specialized needs only compounds a system suffering from racism, poverty, drug abuse, and lacking in available resources and supports. Four dominant themes emerged that impacted placements: Meeting the child’s needs, family precedence, placement predictors, and permanency barriers. Altogether, these findings suggest that poverty, colonialism, and discrimination have indirectly impacted the rate to which Native American children are placed in alternative care today. Native American children with special needs are even at a greater risk of multiple, long-term care placements.

Life Satisfaction and Spirituality in the Elderly
by JoAnn L. Steinbach

Research Chair: Al L. Holloway, Psy.D, MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Jamie Olson, MSW, LCSW; Sarah J. Banks, M.S.

This qualitative research looks at the factors involved in life satisfaction including spirituality in the elderly population. People over the age of 65 are the fastest growing cohort in the United States. In order to participate in this study, participants had to be 65 years of age or older and be their own guardian. Face to face interviews were conducted with six participants to determine the factors involved in life satisfaction and to see if spirituality had an impact. Grounded theory was used where the researcher immersed herself in the data letting the concepts and general themes develop out of the raw data. Social interaction with family members and friends as well as church attendance contributed to life satisfaction for the participants involved in this research. Contrary to research literature, the participants did not feel they had become more spiritual or religious as they aged. Understanding the factors that contribute to life satisfaction for the elderly has implications for social work education and practice.
The Human Experience of Companion Animal Loss
by Dana M. Stewart

Research Chair: Al Holloway, PhD
Committee Members: ristine Kevorkian, PhD; Tammy Bednar, MS

Approximately 62% of households in the United States engage in relationships with companion animals. At some point these individuals endure the loss of that relationship one way or another. The purpose of this project was to explore the human experience of companion animal loss in order to better understand the perceived and felt experience. Using a qualitative design, seven individuals who experienced the loss of a companion animal were interviewed regarding their loss experience, their available social support, their emotional and physical reactions to the loss and their interpretive meaning of the loss. Data was analyzed with open and axial coding techniques. The findings indicated the experiences were devastating to all the participants and involved multiple losses. The majority of the participants found their support network to be helpful and caring. However, a couple of participants found it difficult to express their emotions to family and/or friends due to perceived apathy. Only one participant acknowledged attempting to access support in the form of a pet loss support group. The other participants indicated they had not thought about the option of professional support services or they just preferred to work through their grief on their own or with the help of their immediate support system. These findings indicate companion animal loss is significant, resulting in intense grief, loss of connection on multiple levels, often a change in one’s identity including the belief that part of the self is missing. This points to the need for continued efforts in the social work field in the areas of listening and understanding the stories surrounding companion animal loss. Furthermore, expanding our awareness into the depths of this human experience to realize the need to include such inquiries as a normal part of information gathering as professionals conduct their services.

Resettling in the Twin Cities: The Karen Refugee Experience
by Amelia Storm

Research Chair: Mike Chovanec, Ph.D., LICSW, LMFT
Committee Members: Michelle Ness, MSW, LGSW; Bwei Paw

This study reviews both the obstacles experienced by the Karen refugees resettling in the Twin Cities as well as looks at their strengths. The Karen people are from the southeast part of Burma (Myanmar) and since the country’s independence in 1948 have been in conflict with the Burmese majority. Since 1996, 560,000 people have been internally displaced in Burma as over 3,000 villages in the eastern Karen state have been destroyed as of 2008. Nearly 14,000 refugees of Burmese ancestry entered the United States by 2007 and in the past 10 years, since 2010, 2,174 Karen refugees have arrived in Minnesota. There is an estimated population of 5,000 Karen refugees living in the Twin Cities as of 2011. There are both pre-emigration and post-emigration stressors identified. Pre-emigration factors that add stress to the resettlement process include traumatic events experienced, coming from a rural area verses an urban one, level of education attained and
poor conditions of refugee camps lived in. Post-emigration stressors include learning English, the level of acceptance of refugees by the community resettling into and finding a job. Strong themes (often 4 or 5 out of 5 participants) identified in the study include the importance of English language skills and the availability and utilization of community resources. Coping skills most often used by the Karen include perseverance and initiative in learning and doing all they can individually so they can teach others in the community. Other coping skills included reliance on family, friends, the religious community, and the use of spirituality. This culture of interdependence and connection among the community shows a protective factor for the newly resettling Karen as they begin their challenging journey of acculturation in the Twin Cities.

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**School Response to Student Suicide**
by Roxann Storms

Research Chair: Karen Carlson, M.S.W., Ph.D., L.I.C.S.W.
Committee Members: Lois Rengel, MA, LSW; Loretta Steckelberg, MSW, LICSW

Youth suicide is among the top three causes of death for 15-24 year olds (Underwood, Dunne & Ahrens, 1995; Wolfe, Mertler & Hoffman, 1998), and the tenth leading cause of death for children ages 10-14 (Wolfle, et al., 1998). At some point in time, most school social workers will deal with a student suicide. A review of the literature revealed that school social workers and school counselors do not receive adequate suicide awareness education in their graduate programs and that schools often do not have effective crisis response plans. A qualitative study comparing crisis response plans and postvention services of eight school districts was conducted to assess the ability and capacity of schools to respond to student suicide. Data was analyzed and coded using an inductive grounded theory method, resulting in themes consistent with the literature. Major similarities were found in this research and the literature in the lack of preparatory skills of school social workers and school counselors and in the elements of an effective school crisis response plan, which would ideally be school-led, but include outside community support. In addition, the research revealed that there was a vast array of postvention services implemented. Although offered in a caring and supportive way and with the best of intentions, many of the elements conducted are not recommended by national suicide prevention organizations. These findings have implications for social work in recommending better preparation, both through formal educational opportunities and informal outlets, of clinicians to deal with the devastating impacts of youth suicide. Additional qualitative research focusing on the emotional impacts of suicide from a variety of perspectives would be beneficial to better assist social workers and others in understanding the personal ways that completed suicides affect those who go on living with this tragedy.

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**The Influences of Attachment Styles on Adult Relationships:**
*Clinicians’ Perspectives*
by Stephanie Strand

Research Chair: Cara Carlson, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW
Committee Members: Teresa George, MSW, LICSW; Todd Mulliken, MS, LPCC

School of Social Work, St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas
Attachments to primary caregivers are believed to have important effects on one’s self-esteem and view of the social world (Lopez, 1995). A number of researchers have also used attachment theory to explore and understand the impact that childhood attachments have on romantic relationships. A literature review examined the components of attachment theory, types and traits of attachment styles, and how they affect interactions in romantic relationships. The purpose of this research was to explore how an individual’s childhood attachment pattern affects his/her involvement in romantic relationships as an adult. This qualitative study included interviewing eight mental health clinicians. The interviews were analyzed using inductive grounded theory. The data collected was coded, and seven themes emerged. These seven themes were compared to the review of literature and further discussed. Current research supports previous research in the importance of childhood attachments to healthy relationship functioning, how attachment injuries present themselves, and methods for working with attachment injuries. Future research exploring how insecurely attached individuals can improve their relationship success, how the therapeutic relationship can help heal attachment related injuries, and what treatment methods are most effective with attachment related injuries would be beneficial to the field of clinical social work.

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**A Women’s Experience with Teenage Dating Violence:**

*A Retrospective Study*

by Paula Sundahl

Teenage dating violence has impacted young women from all socioeconomic backgrounds and classes in today’s society. The purpose of this project was to explore the abuse experiences of young girls and see if these experiences impacted their teenage dating relationships. In addition, we explored what abuse the girls and subsequent women faced in their teenage dating relationships. Using a quantitative design, three shelters and one organization helping women experiencing abuse in their adult relationships, agreed to have surveys placed in their organization for women to fill out. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed a link between childhood abuse and abuse in teenage dating relationships. The findings give evidence to the abuse cycle that occurs in a women’s life when the abuse is experienced at a young age. They point to the need of stopping abuse at a young age and starting prevention measures while the women are still teenagers.

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**Clinician’s Perception of the Relationship between Mental Health Diagnosis and Drug of Choice**

by Shelly Suneson

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Larisa Breid, MSW; Jen Metzger, BA, LADC
Mental health and substance abuse are predominant issues today, with each having a unique impact on the individual and society. It is estimated 26% of Americans over 18 years old have a mental health diagnosis and roughly 9% of the population over the age of 12 is considered substance dependent. The purpose of this research was to address patterns in clinician’s perceptions on the relationship between mental health diagnosis and drug of choice. Twenty five individuals responded to an anonymous survey addressing their perception of the relationship between the following mental health diagnoses: Schizophrenia, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder; and the following drugs of choice: Marijuana, Cocaine/Crack, Methamphetamine, Alcohol, Heroin, and Prescription Pills. The findings of this research suggest clinician’s perceive alcohol as the most common drug of choice for all mental health diagnoses, except Schizophrenia. Marijuana was perceived as the most common drug of choice for Schizophrenia and the second most common drug of choice for all other mental health diagnoses addressed. The abuse of prescription pills was a common drug of choice for many diagnoses, as well as the use of cocaine/crack and methamphetamine. As a result of this and previous research, prevention and intervention programs, individual treatment plans and group work, and psychoeducation could be tailored to better serve individuals. Future research in this area is necessary and encouraged to further the understanding of mental health and substance abuse as they act individually and simultaneously.

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The Impact of the GAMC Changes on the Health of Homeless Adults.
by Melody K. Swanson

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, PhD.
Committee Members: Nils Dybvig, MSW; Helene Freint, MPH

People experiencing homelessness have been found to suffer from a disproportionate number of physical, mental, and chemical health concerns when compared to the general population, and as a result, have higher rates of mortality due to the comorbidity of these health conditions in addition to other factors, such as environment and lack of availability of needed services. Little is known about the perceptions of health and health care needs from the viewpoints of persons experiencing homelessness.

This study used a cross-sectional survey design and focus groups utilizing open-ended questions designed to uncover the impact on their health and health care needs as a result of the General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) changes as it was experienced by homeless adults. This study utilized a convenience sample of 12 individuals who were experiencing homelessness and receiving their healthcare benefits through a county-funded CCDS system, the replacement for the GAMC health care program. Data analysis included both a quantitative analyses of statistical data gathered through the surveys, and qualitative data gathered though the open-ended questions asked during the focus group interviews.

The findings demonstrated that this population does have valuable insight into the effect of this policy change on their health care needs, and that they experienced barriers to meeting their health care needs, such as lack of information about changes to the program and available services, long wait times for appointments, and medical transportation. Findings also show that this sample
experienced unmet health care needs as a result of the new program, and indicate a need for medical benefits such as optical, dental, and chemical health services.

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**The Impact of Social Work Intervention in Hospice Care**

by Kelly S. Swartos

Research Chair: Al Holloway, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Diane Jensen, MSW, LICSW; Amanda Lyke, RN

Advances in modern medicine have extended the life expectancy of the average American by 30 years. For this reason, people live for many years with chronic diseases, giving them time to prepare for their expected death. Hospice care is a special “concept of care” that seeks to provide comfort and support to patients and their families at the end of life (National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, 2009). A review of the literature revealed that social workers fulfill an important role in hospice care by providing psychosocial counseling and support to patients and their families during this emotionally-charged time. Several semi-structured, taped interviews were conducted with family members who served as primary caregivers for former hospice patients in order to gain their perspectives on the ways in which the social work intervention impacted their hospice experiences. The data was examined and coded using an inductive grounded theory method. The themes that emerged from the data were recorded and the similarities and differences between the literature and the obtained data were explored in areas such as the needs of the dying patient, the needs of the caregivers, the impact of the admission process on the hospice experience and the social worker’s involvement in hospice care. The findings supported the notion that social workers possess a unique set of skills that provide them with the potential to positively impact a patient and family’s hospice experience. Further research is needed to determine the degree to which social work intervention impacts hospice care and whether or not the services provided affect the total cost of care.

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**Clinical Insights into the Experiences and Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking**

by Sarah S. Thukral

Research Chair: Catherine L. Marrs Fuchsel PhD., LICSW
Committee Members: Sheena Gasner, MSW, LGSW; Sarah Park, Ph.D.

This research project is a qualitative, exploratory study that gives a voice to the experiences and needs of survivors and victims of human trafficking. Several questions were asked in order to guide the study: What are the experiences of victims of human trafficking? What are their experiences during the time they were trafficked, their experiences leaving or escaping their traffickers, and their experiences in seeking or accessing social services or mental health services? A descriptive phenomenological approach to data analysis was adopted by the researcher in order to focus on the perspectives of professionals who work with trafficking victims and the experiences of trafficking
victims as relayed by their testimonies. The ecological perspective, strengths perspective and the empowerment perspective were used as the conceptual frameworks to guide the research, come to an understanding of individuals who have been trafficked in relation to their environments, and view survivors of trafficking in terms of their strengths and resiliencies. Six in-depth, semi-standardized, flexible interviews were conducted with social service providers experienced in working with victims of human trafficking, from a variety of backgrounds, including social workers, psychologists, case managers, lawyers and nurses. Six testimonies written by survivors of human trafficking were collected and used to give a voice to survivors of trafficking and supplement the experiences described by service providers. Five dominant themes, each with several sub-themes emerged from the data. The themes that emerged were: a) the nature of human trafficking, b) the experiences of victims of human trafficking, c) the needs of trafficking victims, d) barriers to accessing and providing services, and e) systemic issues: barriers and changes. The findings of this study supported those of previous studies, as well as provided new and valuable information regarding the experiences of women who have been trafficked. This study points to many implications for future research, policy and social work practice.

Subjective Challenges of Clinical Therapists in working with African Immigrants and Refugees Exposed to Trauma
by Nelly N. Torori

Research Chair: Colin F. Hollidge, MSW, PhD. LISW
Committee Members:  Paul Orieny, PhD.  LMFT; David Schuchman, MSW, LICSW

The U.S. continues to be one of the prominent immigrant and refugee-receiving country in worldwide migration, resettlement, and search for refuge. Most of these groups have been affected by severe traumatic experiences from their countries of origin. As the clinicians listen to the client trauma stories, there are multiple levels of challenges that may not only be a backdrop for the clinical work, but also an acknowledged fact in many therapeutic relationships, a condition that changes the frame of the work. This study explores some of these subjective challenges, in an explorations study in their work with African immigrants and refugees' trauma stories. A qualitative research design was used to gather data from six clinicians practicing in the Twin Cities. Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth firsthand challenges and their internal and external responses. A grounded theory utilizing content analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Findings revealed many interrelated challenges facing therapists such as language barriers, and work with interpreters, cultural differences, time, and client’s immigration status and how it is manifested in the trauma, vicarious trauma, counter-transference, change in therapist worldview, and therapists’ self-care for emotional health. The study also illuminated that limited personal resources and diminished social networks are an impediment to coping with integration and settlement challenges that posits as a challenge for developing and maintaining therapeutic relationships. Immigration and asylum seeking policies were also identified as challenges. The study implications to social work is the need to integrate these challenges in training, especially the need for a trauma system that incorporates trauma-sensitive care, trauma-informed treatment and trauma-informed environment during practice to be
able to identify, develop and be aware of traumatized refugee’s needs and the therapist’s need and use of self during therapy.

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**Yoga-Psychotherapy: A Clinical Social Worker’s Perspective**  
by Tessa Tuetken

Research Chair: Mari A. Graham, Ph. D., LISW  
Committee Members: George Baboila, MSW, LICSW; Janet Dahlem, MA

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative medicine reports that yoga is being used as a complementary form of health care by nearly 13 million Americans in 2007. With the push towards holistic health and the rise in use of yoga as complementary health care, clinical social workers may find that clients benefit from a combination of yoga and psychotherapy. Yoga-psychotherapy is the integration of yoga into a psychotherapeutic setting by a mental health practitioner who is also a certified yoga instructor. The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe how clinical social workers, who are also certified yoga instructors, integrated yoga into their clinical practice. This study used a qualitative research method with four mental health practitioners who integrate yoga into their clinical practice. The following themes emerged from the data: the clinician’s motivation to integrate, challenges integrating, conducting the session, generalizing the skills, boundary issues, and learning through the body. Findings supported by the literature, unexpected findings, implications for social work, and implications for future research is discussed.

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**Losses in Adoption: The Lived Experiences of Adult Adoptees**  
by Amber Turcotte

Research Chair: Mari Ann Graham, PhD., LICSW  
Committee Members: Sarah Park, Ph.D.; Jennifer Wilson, MSW

Adoptions have increased overtime with international adoption peaking in the United States in 2004 and public child welfare adoptions peaking in 2009. Although there has been a decline in adoptions in recent years, adoptees have become a recognized group among adoptive parents, adoption social workers, and mental health professionals. Research has been done about adoptees, but they have not had much say in what support and resources they need. The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of adult adoptees through the adoption journey to better understand their needs. This study utilized qualitative research methods. Nine adult adoptees were interviewed and the following themes emerged from the data: impact on relationships, identity development, experiencing racism, birth parent connections, connections to birth country and culture, connections with other adoptees, ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief, and adoption as a journey. Findings supported by the literature, unexpected findings, practice implications, implications for future research are discussed.
Cultural and Environmental Factors that Help or Deter Hmongs from Seeking Mental Health Services
by Mayli Vang

Studies indicate that there are numerous barriers for minorities that prevent them from seeking mental health services. Asians are more likely to have negative views of mental illness which may deter them from seeking help for mental services. The present research study sought to understand the influences of demographic, social-cultural, perception of mental illness, and relational factors on Hmongs from seeking mental health services. Participants were asked to take an on-line survey that included three scales (Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale, Beliefs Towards Mental Illness and Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help). The findings suggest that among bi-cultural Hmongs, the majority of whom indicate the willingness to seek mental health services (67%), there are still the negative, stereotypical views of mental illness. The BTMI and SSRPH scale scores in this study reflect higher stigma and negative views of mental illness when compared with studies that have been done on the larger general population, as well as studies on other ethnic minority groups.

Living with an Unpredictable, Uncontrollable Chronic Disease: How Young Adult Women Cope with Inflammatory Bowel Disease
by Jennifer L. Verdegan

Inflammatory bowel disease is a chronic disease consisting of unpredictable and uncontrollable flares. The purpose of this study was to explore how young adult women with IBD cope with living with IBD. Obstacles related to education, employment, dating, marriage, and having children were explored. Five women from Minnesota and Iowa participated in qualitative interviews. Findings suggest that young adult women with IBD utilize a toolbox of coping skills including emotion-oriented, problem-oriented, avoidant-oriented, and supportant. Twenty-six themes emerged, with 22 coping skills identified as helpful and three coping skills identified as unhelpful in coping with IBD. Avoidance was identified as both helpful and unhelpful. Helpful coping skills included positive reinterpretation, planning ahead, and seeking support. Unhelpful coping skills included over planning and self pity. Social workers need to be aware of obstacles as well as both helpful and unhelpful coping skills in order to best meet the needs of people with IBD.

Perinatal Loss: Grief Resolution and its Effects on Subsequent Children
by Angela S. Vigen
Parents experiencing a perinatal loss, such as a miscarriage or a stillbirth, grieve in different ways. In order to move through the stages of the grief cycle and work towards a resolution of their loss, the parents often turn to mental health practitioners, such as social workers. The focus of this qualitative study was to explore the role of a social worker in helping parents who have experienced a perinatal loss understand their own grief as well as the grief of the other parent, to educate them in ways they can help their live children grieve, and to process the decision to have a subsequent child. The current study gathered information through past literature and personal interviews with mental health practitioners about the: (1) emotional toll a couple feels after they experience a perinatal death, (2) how they work through their grief either together or separately, and (3) what can practitioners do to help the parents feel some resolution of their grief prior to having a subsequent child. It was found through conducting this study parents who have experienced a perinatal death do not always seek treatment for their grief immediately following the loss. This though may cause difficulties later when other distressing events occur. Mental health practitioners find parents can work towards a resolution of their grief, and may possibly be ready to have subsequent children, though not every parent moves through the stages in the same order or at the same pace.

Social Workers Roles in Closing the Educational Achievement Gap

by Mary Vorpahl

The research conducted is to assess school social workers roles in closing the educational achievement gap between black and white students. The research design used was an interpretive methodology with qualitative methods. Qualitative method was used to obtain information from school social workers currently working in elementary, junior, and senior high schools in the southwest metro area of Minneapolis, MN. Grounded theory was used as the method of building themes. The initial information was obtained from interviews with the participants and then the themes were formed through the coding process. Four themes were identified by the research. The themes are equity issues between black and white students, poverty as a barrier to educational achievement, school social work interventions aimed at closing the educational achievement gap, and school social workers roles in closing the educational achievement gap. The following are implications for social work practice; School social workers can make an effort to be mindful of the educational achievement gap by implementing it into their education to administrators, teacher, and students. School social workers can assist in policy change related to school reform, institutional racism, as well as poverty. Finally social workers have the ability to conduct research related to the educational achievement gap and school social workers ability for change at a macro level.
The Therapeutic Needs of Young Adults Following Divorce
by Amanda Wagner

Research Chair: Tamara Kaiser, Ph.D., LICSW, LMFT
Committee Members: Carol Wichers, MA, LMFT, LICSW; Todd Mulliken, MS

Divorce has become a frequent, predictable life event that will occur to nearly half of all couples who marry. The divorce experience tends to be traumatic, involving significant life disruptions and depending on the life-stage of the individual, the experience varies greatly. Most literature on divorce focuses on the impact of divorce on middle-age adults and their children while virtually no literature exists on the experience of divorce during young adulthood—a time when an individual is still maturing developmentally. The purpose of this project was to explore the experiences of young adults following their divorce while paying particular attention to their therapeutic needs during this traumatic life event. Using a qualitative design, 8 divorced young adults were interviewed regarding their experience. Data were analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring concepts and themes. The findings identified the internal and external impacts of divorce on these young adults, ways they coped, and the lasting impacts of divorce in their lives. These findings demonstrate the pervasive, lasting effects divorce has on an individual. Practitioners need to be prepared, when working with the recently divorced young adult, to stabilize and process through the initial high-distress stages following divorce and then resolve the deeper injuries the experience has inflicted on the individual. As young adulthood is naturally a period of life full of transition and discovery, a significant event such as divorce intensifies and potentially disrupts this process. It is imperative for practitioners to provide services for these individuals that identify and address these disruptions with specific attention on identity exploration and formation.

Exploring the Presence of Traumatic Brain Injury in the Transitional Housing Program
by Janet L. Westlund

Research Chair: Cara L. Carlson, Ph. D, LICSW
Committee Members: Anne L. Bushnell, LGSW; Lesley Babb, CBIS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the presence of Traumatic Brain Injury in the transitional housing setting. It was the researcher’s desire to learn if Traumatic Brain Injury is recognized in transitional housing settings and how it is addressed. Data for this study was received from a variety of transitional housing settings which included a range of programmatic expectations. Findings indicated that persons with brain injury are utilizing transitional housing and that programs are minimally equipped to respond to residents with this injury. Few programs initially assess for Traumatic Brain Injury, and some communicated the ability to refer for more appropriate services. Implications of this study include the need for expanding social work programs to include education on Traumatic Brain Injury, training direct service staff, and additional research on this topic.
Rates of Completion: Do Medical Social Workers Complete Advance Directives for Themselves?
by Caroline C. Wikman

Research Chair: Keith DeRaad, Ph.D
Committee Members: Gretchen Vanderlinden-Wang, LGSW; Dianne Feltham, LGSW

An advance health care directive, or advance directive, is a formal or informal written statement to be used in the event of an individual no longer being able to make decisions expressing what medical treatment or care she/he wants or does not want (Brown, 2006). The purpose of this project was to shed light onto the question ‘Do medical social workers complete advance directives for themselves?’ and illuminate some of the factors that effect completion. Using a quantitative design, seventy-seven medical social workers from the Minnesota area completed a twelve-question survey. Findings indicated that 50% of the participants had completed an advanced directive for themselves.

Parenting Styles and Demographic Information Of Adoptive Parents
by Crystal L. Wilkinson

Research Chair: Sarah Ferguson, MSW, MA, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Sue Beyenhof, MSW, LCSW; Lori Flogstad, MSW

The purpose of this study is to look at the demographic information and the parenting styles of adoptive parents. The demographic information includes age, gender, race, income, marital status, educational level and employment. The parenting styles assessed feelings of adoptive parents regarding sadness, fear, and anger both in them and in their children. Based on the adoptive parent’s answers they were scored and four different parenting styles were discussed. This study showed the dominate and most effective parenting style to be the “The Emotion Coach.” These are parents that value the child’s emotions, are aware of their own values and emotions, and help the child solve their problems on their timeline. A high number of adoptive parents are educated and earn over a $40,000 income. The finding will be useful when licensing families to be approved for adoption and in assessing families for placement of adoptive children.

The Youth’s Perspective on Out-of-Home Care
by Nicole Williamson

Research Chair: Carol F. Kuechler, MSW, PhD., LISW
Committee Members: Amirthini Keefe, MSW, LICSW; Lisa Richardson, MSS, LICSW; Lori Swenson, MA; Richard Spratt, MSW, LICSW

Children in foster care have diverse, but often difficult personal histories. In the literature, the perspectives of the agencies responsible for these children, the child welfare workers who work with
them, the foster parents who care for them, and the birth parents from whose care they are removed are all explored in some depth. The perspectives of the children in these out-of-home placements, however, are often neglected. To deepen our understanding of a child’s experience in foster care, with an emphasis on kin care, youth at an urban drop-in center for homeless or precariously housed youth were given voice about their perspectives about living with adults other than their birth parents through interviews. Ten youth completed an interview, which consisted of both rating items and open-ended items about the youth’s experience with child protection agencies, child welfare workers, foster parents and birth parents. While the youth’s experiences varied from participant to participant, one common theme emerged: the youth have not felt heard by the adults making the decisions about their placements. This finding shows the importance of incorporating the desires of the child in foster care when making decisions as a child welfare worker on behalf of the child. Also of note was that all the youth lacked resources and services after aging-out of the foster care system, which is one suggested direction for further research.

**Romantic Partners’ Perceptions of Eating Disorders on Relationship Dynamics**  
by Stephanie Wilmes-Hess

Research Chair: Lance Peterson, MSW, PhD., LISW  
Committee Members: Rebecca Rand, MSW, LGSW; James Nee, BSW

This study explores perceptions of romantic partners involved in long term cohabitating relationships with someone who has an eating disorder diagnosis. A qualitative study was conducted to look at perception in terms of impact on romantic partners. Three men were interviewed and discussed experiences in their relationship. Grounded theory methodology was used to analyze the data. Impacts in terms of lack of support, feelings of helplessness, lack of intimacy in the relationship and impacts on others were identified. Implications for social work practice as well as areas for future research were also identified.

**The Effects of Therapeutic Programming on Mental Health Staffs’ Attitudes toward Inpatient Populations**  
by Victoria A. Zwiefelhofer

Research Chair: Al Holloway, Ph. D  
Committee Members: Jarred Duellman, LCSW; Heidi Frank, LCSW

Multiple stakeholders exist within the mental health system: consumers, family members, mental health facilities, local, county, state mental health programs and support staff for all aforementioned providers (Mueser, Torrey, Lynde, Singer, & Drake, 2003). A review of literature has revealed that the shift from custodial care to rehabilitation and recovery was met with resistance from inpatient psychiatric staff. Implementation of evidence-based therapeutic methods empowering patient populations to become active participants in their mental health care has become more commonplace on inpatient psychiatric units (Birkmann, Sperdito, Smith, & Grill, 2006; Hazelton, Rossiter, &
Milner, 2006; Wright, Williams, & Garland, 2002). Similar themes found in the research data support the literature review: importance of cognitive behavioral therapeutic approach and resistance of mental health staff to implementation of therapeutic programming. Education and participation partnered by a multidisciplinary approach emerged as a theme in the data from this research. Donat, (2006) found that providing education to multidisciplinary teams resulted in more positive staff attitudes toward patients. Results of this research depicted the largest shift in attitudes occurred in nursing staff. Social workers were involved directly in implementation and facilitation of the programming. This research was conducted by completion of qualitative interviews of multidisciplinary staff employed on an inpatient psychiatric unit. Inductive grounded theory method was utilized. Data was analyzed and coded. Significant themes identified in the data were recorded. Further research may determine how much of the attitudinal shift relates to interdisciplinary education in comparison to education and implementation of evidence-based therapeutic programming.