Doctoral Project Abstracts

2015 PsyD candidates in Clinical and School Psychology

Lillian Alexander
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Awe and the Relationship Between Connection to Nature and Sense of Meaning in Life

The purpose of this study was to examine the emotion of awe as a moderator in the relationship between connection to nature and sense of meaning in life. Previous research found a significant positive correlation between these two variables, so this study aimed to understand potential mechanisms involved in this relationship. A review of the current literature revealed that awe had been investigated in relation to connection to nature, but awe had not been explored in relation to connection to nature and sense of meaning in life. This study used a quantitative method to explore awe as a moderator variable to investigate these relationships. Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire in addition to the Nature Relatedness Scale, Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale, and Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The survey was completed online by 527 adults aged 19 to 89. This study replicated the finding that a significant, positive relationship exists between connection to nature and sense of meaning in life. Although the emotion of awe was not found to be moderator variable, it did mediate the relationship between connection to nature and life meaning. The connection to nature no longer predicted meaning in life once awe was introduced as a variable. This points to the importance of the cultivation of awe in relation to the enhancement of one's meaning in life. This study replicated previous findings that a significant positive correlation exists between connection to nature and sense of meaning in life and that one's search for meaning in life is inversely related to age. It also found that women report a higher degree of connection to nature, search for meaning in life, and disposition towards the emotion of awe and individuals reporting a post-graduate education have higher presence of life meaning than those with a college degree. The current research discusses the therapeutic value of awe as an emotion that might facilitate greater wellbeing and buffer against negative health effects.

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June 2015

Muslim-American Adolescents: Exploring Muslim and American Identities in Adolescents and their Parents

In order to address the gaps in the literature of Muslim-American identity development in the post-9/11 era of the United States, this research aims to explore how Muslim-American adolescents understand their multiple identities and how their parents contributed to this understanding. Eleven parents and their adolescent children (n = 9), between the ages of 14 and 17 years, from nine Muslim-American families were asked to participate in separate, confidential interviews in order to compare parent and adolescent understandings of the adolescents' multiple identities. Parents and children separately filled out demographic instruments. All adolescents were US-born; their parents had been born in seven different countries, including the U.S., and had a wide range of ethnic origins. All participants but one attended mosques. Interviews were conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area and the greater Boston area. A thematic analysis was used to identify themes and patterns that emerged within adolescent and adult interviews, within particular families, and across all interviews. A total of eight meta-themes and four generation-specific themes (i.e., two parent and two adolescent) were identified. These include eight themes across all interviews and two themes each within parent and adolescent interviews. Themes across all interviews include a discussion of the challenges that Muslim Americans face, issues of acculturation, how to live as Muslim Americans in post-9/11 U.S., a responsibility to educate others about

Islam and Muslims, having varying degrees of pride in religious, ethnic, and cultural identities, and the importance of family. Parents discussed parenting practices and their observations of their adolescent children's compliance with what they had taught them. At the same time, while the adolescents discussed an appreciation for what their parents had taught them, several also communicated a desire to develop their own perspectives, which differed somewhat from those of their parents. Finally, the study was critiqued and implications of the study for mental health professionals and community leaders who work with Muslim-American adolescents and their families were discussed. After offering suggestions for future research, the author offered personal reflections on her experience of doing the research, as a Muslim-American psychologist in training.

Eleonora Bass
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June 2015

The American Dream and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Role of Cultural Values in Happiness and Well-Being

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among happiness, individualistic and collectivistic cultural values, acculturation, social support and length of time since family immigration to the United States. Based on previous studies of this topic, the following was hypothesized: 1) Scores on the VIA will be predictive of scores on the SHS and positive affect on the PANAS; immigration status (1. Participant, parents, and grandparents were born in the US; 2. At least one grandparent was born outside of the US; 3. At least one parent was born outside the US; 4. Participant was born outside the US) will be predictive of scores on the SHS and positive affect on the PANAS; 2) There will be a statistically significant relationship between scores on horizontal and vertical individualism (ICS subscales) and scores on the SHS, PANAS (positive and negative affect), and SVS (individual differences and state level); and 3) ISEL will moderate the relationships between ICS subscales (HI, VI, HC, VC) and VIA with both SHS and positive affect on the PANAS. This study utilized a non-experimental design. In all, 128 participants completed a 30-minute online survey containing measures of acculturation (Vancouver Index of Acculturation measure; VIA), experiences of social support amongst college students (Interpersonal Support Evaluation List - College Version; ISEL), cultural orientations such as individualism and collectivism (Individualism and Collectivism Scale; ICS), overall happiness/well-being (Subjective Happiness Scale; SHS) (Subjective Vitality Scales; SVS), and affective happiness/well-being (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule questionnaire; PANAS) (Subjective Vitality Scales; SVS). Demographic information was also provided by participants. In this study, knowing the participants' immigration status or acculturation (VIA score) was not predictive or related to their reported experiences of happiness (scores on SHS and positive affect on the PANAS). This study revealed that participants who more strongly identified with horizontal collectivism (HC on ICS subscales) reported experiencing more overall (scores on SHS and Individual Differences on SVS) and affective happiness (positive affect score on the PANAS). Lastly, it was found that horizontal collectivism (HC on ICS subscales) and social support (ISEL) were significant predictors for overall (represented by SHS) and affective happiness (represented by positive affect on PANAS); however, social support (ISEL) was not found to be a statistically significant moderator for the relationships between acculturation (VIA score) and horizontal collectivism (HC on ICS subscales) and both constructs of happiness (overall and affective; SHS and positive affect on PANAS, respectively). Recommendations for future research include: asking specific questions on customs, language, beliefs, and practices to capture the unique experiences of an individual, rather than using cultural labels which lack operationalization; exploring the study hypotheses with a sample more representative of the US population so the buffering effect could be avoided; exploring the study hypotheses with other cultural groups and doing so in their country and in the native language, in which case, reliable translations of the questionnaire would be required.

Rhonda Beck
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June 2015

An Exploration of the Life Course of and Recovery from Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

Non-suicidal self-injurious behavior (NSSI) is defined as the intentional destruction of bodily tissue without suicidal intent. Studies of NSSI suggest the behavior occurs at a rate of 4% in the general adult population and 14%-39% in adolescent community samples. These rates increase to up to 60% in clinical samples. NSSI is an increasingly common behavior encountered by clinicians. This research explored the reported subjective experiences of individuals who engage in NSSI with respect to the life course of and their thoughts on their recovery process from NSSI. The study used a phenomenological, qualitative design with a semi-structured interview given to nine participants who self-reported a history consistent with the definition of repetitive NSSI. The most consistent findings were that participants (a) reported that anger played a significant role in their NSSI, (b) that they nearly all carried considerable shame about NSSI and felt that secrets around NSSI damaged their lives, and, (c) that stigma in the community considerably impacts support seeking. These findings each have serious implications for the future of research and training around the issue of NSSI. The ability to conduct a thorough assessment and the ability to listen to clients non-judgmentally represent critically important clinical skills, and the ability to accurately identify risk and to define treatment goals may have serious implications for who returns to treatment and who never returns. Unfortunately, this study suggests that many mental health workers and primary care providers are struggling to effectively establish rapport with individuals who reveal NSSI. This finding suggests that some interactions with treatment providers may increase client risk, and at the very least, may make clients' struggles more complicated and distressing. Thus, the major recommendation that emerges from this study is that policies should be implemented within the field that aim to formalize, standardize, and demystify NSSI assessment, first response, and treatment so that clinicians acquire the knowledge and skills needed to minimally "do no harm" and optimally support clients in moving towards recovery.

Richard Drury
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June 2015

The Influence of Graduate Students' Knowledge of Evidence-Based Practice in Psychology on Perception of its Clinical Utility

Evidence-based practice in psychology (EBPP) is a concept that has been debated and confused with other terminology, but essentially represents a comprehensive approach to patient care. EBPP is important for promoting effective psychological assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning and outcomes. Previous research has demonstrated that graduate students in clinical psychology doctoral programs were unable to identify the constructs of the EBPP model (i.e., best available research, clinical expertise, and patient characteristics). The current study examined if providing graduate students with definitions of certain terminology associated with EBPP would influence their attitudes and perceptions of its clinical utility. The sample included 56 participants who completed a survey consisting of questions before and after the definitions were provided for EBPP and empirically supported treatments (ESTs). The results revealed that providing the two aforementioned definitions significantly reduced the misconception that the terms are synonymous and increased the extent to which participants agreed with the principles behind EBPP. Informing graduate students and clinicians about EBPP and related concepts will contribute to its clinical utility within the field of psychology.

Taylor Dunlap
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June 2015

Adult Children's Experience of the Father-Child Relationship After Domestic Violence

"Domestic violence is an ongoing public health crisis in the United States affecting one out of every four women. In recent years, research focused on the effects of witnessing domestic violence on children has greatly expanded. Research exploring the effect that witnessing domestic violence has on the parent-child relationship is scant at best and primarily focuses on the mother-child relationship. Information regarding the effects on the father-child relationship is virtually nonexistent. The current research examined how children who witnessed domestic violence as children experience the father-child relationship during early adulthood. The study used a qualitative design and included a semi-structured interview that was given to 11 participants who identified as child witnesses to domestic violence with their father as the perpetrator. While results revealed a wide range of experiences regarding the father-child relationship, the most consistent finding was that participants did not currently have positive relationships with their fathers and did not desire to pursue any kind of relationship with their fathers in the future at this stage of development. Participants reported continued fear of their fathers, issues with trust within the relationship, and difficulties with communication and emotional closeness with their fathers. Most notable was participants' apparent resignation regarding the father-child relationship. The current study revealed that witnessing domestic violence in childhood might have negatively impacted participants' attachment styles with their fathers and that the effects of witnessing domestic violence in childhood are enduring and long lasting. The limitations of this study and implications for further research and clinical practice are discussed."

Isabelle Eccles
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June 2015

The Morning After: Emerging Adults' Perspective on the Impact of Hookup Culture

"While many researchers have studied romantic relationships or sexual behaviors among emerging adults (ages 18-25), the phenomenon of hookup culture is relatively newer. Young adults in this population may not be participating in the traditional dating script and, instead, are negotiating a new way of interacting that has more ambiguous boundaries, less communication, and a greater emphasis on immediate satisfaction. While there are benefits to hooking up, these experiences also have numerous consequences for emerging adults, many of which have been identified by recent research. The purpose of this study is to continue the exploration of how emerging adults are impacted by hookup culture by asking them to reflect and self-report on how hookup experiences have impacted their self-esteem, sense of power, and interpersonal satisfaction. The study investigates this through a quantitative online survey that included demographic questions and three scales: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Sense of Power Scale, and The Basic Need Satisfaction in Relationships Scale. Results of the study indicate that several factors may influence how emerging adults' understand the impact of hookup experiences, including their age, the recency of a hookup experience, and total number of both hookup and exclusive relationship partners. Clinical implications for the field of psychology and recommendations for future research are presented."

William Fitzgerald
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

The Effects of Psychiatric Labels on Psychotherapist Attitudes Towards Potential Clients with Major Mental Illness

Ways to eradicate stigma against people with mental illness or contributing factors to its existence are not readily established. This study contributes to understanding how the communication of diagnosis activates negative attitudes in psychotherapists. A mixed-methods, randomized, research design was employed via an online survey to measure how subtle shifts in the language of diagnosis, either identity-first language or person-first language, impact therapist attitudes related to potential clients with schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, and bipolar disorder. Independent t-tests and Pearson correlation analyses were conducted. Participants held significantly more negative attitudes, particularly in regards to desire to treat, comfort in treating, and belief that treatment would result in improvement, when the person was referred to as a "borderline" as opposed to having borderline personality disorder. Some unexpected findings included all the measured attitudes being positively correlated with one another outside of expected length of treatment and doctoral level practitioners perceiving significantly higher levels of stigma than masters level clinicians.

Mark Furtado
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June 2015

An Exploration of Sexual Minority Mental Health Providers' Experiences with Client-Initiated Homophobia

Few studies have explored the effects of prejudice in the therapeutic context, and even fewer have considered the experience from the perspective of the therapist. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of sexual minority mental health providers who have experienced client-initiated homophobia. The study used a mixed-methods approach to gather information about key variables including participant age, stage of sexual identity development, and positive and negative affective responses. The data was collected using a demographic questionnaire, the Gay Identity Questionnaire, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and open-ended questions. The data was analyzed using frequency calculations, tests of statistical significance, and a thematic analysis of the participants' written responses. The results of the study indicated that there is no relationship between age and stage of sexual identity development. Furthermore, participants in later stages did not endorse lower levels of distress. Participants' described experiencing negative reactions consistent with existing stigmatization models. In general, participants whose clinical responses were based on therapeutic motivations, as opposed to personal motivations, reported more positive outcomes. The results of the study indicate that while prejudice can be damaging, if the clinician is prepared and self-aware, it can result in positive outcomes for both the clinician and the client

Rochelle Greene
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June 2015

The Religious and Spiritual Healing Capacity of the Transcendent Function and Its Application in Clinical Treatment

The purpose of this study was to explore whether the meaning and relevance individuals find in their religious of spiritual experience have a sustaining impact on psychological healing when incorporated in outpatient clinical treatment. This study was also intended to understand how therapists receive and respond to clients who present religious or spiritual experiences and the impact of this response on the client's religious or spiritual development in the formation of a whole and balanced self. The framework for understanding spiritual or religious experience is the tension of the opposites which, when reconciled, emerge as the transcendent function, which, according to Jung, is the seat of religious experience. According to Jung, the transcendent function

is the heart of "individuation," the process by which one is guided teleologically toward the original potential wholeness of the Self. The tension of the opposites can be understood through dualities such as light and darkness, life and death, male and female, internal and external, and even religious and spiritual when juxtaposed as opposites.

Clients seeking religious or spiritual meaning are often on a quest to discover what they believe they are meant to become as synthetic, that is, purposive toward future growth and transcendence. The role of the therapist is to carry these "unrealized potentials for psychological transformation" by "being open to carrying whatever aspects of initiatory change the patient needs to encounter at any given moment" (Joseph as cited in Miller, 2004, p. 20). The literature review revealed that considerable information is available on the role of religion and spirituality as it affects healing but little research has been devoted to examining how spirituality and religious has been successfully integrated in clinical treatment. Even less is known about how spiritual transformation promotes healing in clinical settings through simultaneously holding and reconciling these oppositional tensions in order to produce this third entity known as the transcendent function.

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach through interviews with thirteen individuals who described the meaning and relevance of their religious or spiritual experiences in the context of psychological healing. Results revealed a range of religious and spiritual experiences, which strongly and positively impacted participants' lives by providing new and heightened experiences of hope, spiritual nourishment, open-heartedness, compassion, an urge toward faith and belief, clarity of their life's purpose, closeness to nature, a sense of belonging, realizations of one's identity, a more spacious place, and a gift. Three of the thirteen participants currently include their spiritual or religious experiences in therapy and five participants are seeking a therapist with whom they can share this aspect of themselves. While the other five participants had not expressed initial interest in sharing their experiences in therapy, they described the value and influence their religion or spirituality has on their psychological functioning. Ten of the thirteen participants have not found therapists who welcomed or encouraged the inclusion of religious or therapeutic experiences, sensed discomfort in their therapists, or reported fears of being misunderstood by sharing spiritual or religious experiences. Participants reported that connections with the spiritual or religious dimension of their lives provided them with renewed energy and inspiration to persevere through personal losses, including deaths of parents, siblings and children, personal struggles with depression, anxiety, and trauma, and crises and challenges such as loss of career at critical periods in their lives. One participant developed stronger love for herself through "channeling God," another experienced an intimate relationship with God which revealed to her purpose in the world, and another described a numinous experience that felt more real than reality when communicating with God.

An analysis of the results also indicated that, as these participants reflected upon the healing capacity of their religious or spiritual experiences and examined and constructed meaning through the interview process, they generated questions, gained new insights, reconsidered possibilities, and deepened their understanding of the connections between these experiences and their therapeutic treatment. Whether these experiences were described as intuitively known within the self or externally experienced as an entity beyond oneself, participants experienced the urge to transcend beyond dyadic tensions and forces, such as good and evil, self and other, and conscious rational experience versus the unknown and mysterious elements of the self and the universe. In addition, participants acknowledged the relationship between the interaction of religious and spiritual experience and psychological treatment in promoting the development of a whole, balanced, and individuated self.

Bailey Hanek
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June 2015

The Clinical Use of Sexually Explicit Media in Treatment of Sexual Concerns

The use of sexually explicit media (SEM) in society generally, and in sex therapy specifically, is widely debated. SEM interventions in sex therapy are thought to reduce sexual shame, a widespread and detrimental phenomenon in the United States. However, literature regarding the use of SEM interventions is lacking, and clear guidelines do not yet exist. The current study was conducted to examine the process by which certified sex therapists determine whether or not to use SEM interventions in treatment. This study used a phenomenological, qualitative design. A semi-structured interview was given to ten AASECT-certified sex therapists. While results revealed a myriad of factors influencing clinicians' decisions, the most consistent finding was the importance of cautious and judicious use. Though there was little consensus in any one particular area, the data exposed additional insights into clinicians' decision-making processes that have important clinical, ethical, and research implications.

Bryan Harnsberger
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June 2015

Status Dynamics, Through-lines, and the Dramaturgical Pattern of the Recovering Addict

The aim of this study is to examine the dramaturgical pattern of the recovering addict from a Descriptive Psychology perspective. The etymology of recovery, literature on recovery communities, through-lines, and the study of narratives in substance abuse are reviewed. How one becomes a recovering addict, the implications for this status assignment, community membership, and the manner in which the addiction allows for possible world enhancement, restriction or destruction, and reconstruction as in the recovering addict's dramaturgical pattern will be discussed. It is proposed that recovery communities such as Alcoholics Anonymous, or any other satisfying community, facilitate the completion or connection of a coherent through-line that allows a satisfying dramaturgical pattern to develop, therefore clarifying the continuity of satisfaction once occupied by the addiction.

David Helfand
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June 2015

Clients' Experiences and the Therapeutic Relationship During Neurofeedback Training

Neurofeedback (NFB) has been shown to be an effective intervention for a variety of conditions. Other research has clearly demonstrated the significance of the therapeutic relationship in psychotherapy, but very little research has explored the intersection between this factor and NFB. The current study investigated clients' experiences during NFB training including their relationship with the NFB clinician, their perceptions about the NFB equipment, and any benefits or iatrogenic effects of NFB training. The researcher used qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews to collect data from 15 participants who were current or recent clients of NFB providers. All interviews were coded and analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Results from this study suggested that many of the factors that impact the therapeutic relationship in psychotherapy are also important considerations in NFB training. Participants also noted some unique factor that might negatively impact the therapeutic relationship such as the presence or absence of a clinician during NFB training, and the use of multiple clinicians being involved in a client's care. It was also interesting that almost every participant reported being initially skeptical about NFB, which reportedly remediated over the course of his or her training. Participants also discussed barriers to engaging in NFB including financial and time constraints. Additionally, some participants reported experiencing temporary iatrogenic effects, but all participants endorsed benefiting from NFB training overall. The current study contributed to a gap in the literature on NFB, and the researcher hopes that future studies will continue the investigation into these variables."

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Anxiety in Multiple Sclerosis: Associations between Clinical and Psychosocial Variables

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients have been found to have high levels of anxiety yet very little has been published on the topic. The objective of this study was to identify associations between anxiety and demographic and disease course variables, cognitive function and patient reported outcome measures in patients with MS. 303 CLIMB study participants were administered the State Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults to assess the current temporary "state anxiety" and the more general "trait anxiety." Participants also completed the Multiple Sclerosis Quality of Life 54, Modified Fatigue Impact Scale, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, and the Symbol Digit Modalities Test, a brief cognitive screening measure. Finally, participants underwent a neurological exam that included the expanded disability status scale (EDSS) and disease category ratings. In our sample, the mean (SD; range) state anxiety score was 31.8 (11.14; 20-76), and the mean (SD; range) trait anxiety score was 34.6 (11.6; 20-76). State and trait anxiety scores were highly correlated (r =0.86, p<0.0001). 14.5% (state) and 21.9% (trait) of patients scored in the moderate to high anxiety range. Moderate to strong negative correlations were observed between anxiety and mental QOL (State r =-0.71; Trait r =-0.75, p<0.0001) and physical QOL (state, r =-0.25, trait r =-0.25, p<0.0001). Moderate to strong positive correlations were observed between anxiety and fatigue scores (state, r =0.54, trait r =0.61, p<0.0001) and depression scores (state r =0.19 state, trait r =0.84, p<0.0001). Weaker, but statistically significant correlations were observed with EDSS (state r=0.19, p=0.0009; trait r=0.27, p<0.0001). Social support (State -0.29; Trait -0.36) was associated with decreased anxiety. There were no significant correlations with cognitive functioning. In multivariate models depression and the mental health score of the quality of life scale were the strongest predictor of either state or trait anxiety. In conclusion, anxiety is an important feature of MS: 21.9% of our population scored in the clinically moderate to high anxiety range. Increased anxiety correlated with lower mental and physical QOL, lower social support; as well as increased fatigue, and depression. Additionally, our results suggest that anxiety as it relates to disease severity might be better explained by the patient's view of their health, than the physician rated level of progression. These finding highlight the need for identification and treatment of patients with anxiety.

Leah Iarossi
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June 2015

The Ambivalence of Medication Adherence in Parkinson's Disease

Despite the reported estimate that only 10% of individuals with Parkinson's disease (PD) fully adhere to their medication regimen, there is minimal research on the ambivalence towards non-adherence. The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of PD and ambivalence of medication adherence to understand various themes and beliefs in medication ambivalence. This understanding can aid individuals with PD in obtaining important information in proper use of medication and how it could prevent worsening symptoms and the potential result of requiring emergency care. Individuals (N=7) with a confirmed diagnosis of PD, 18 or older, and were being prescribed medication for PD by a neurologist, were recruited by contacting support groups for Parkinson's disease and obtaining referrals from family and friends. Those who met criteria for the study participated in an individual semi-structured interview, which was audio recorded. It was found that one out of seven participants fully adhered to their medication regimen (i.e. prescribed medication dose and timing). Themes and variables for ambivalence and non-adherence to medications regimens were found to be forgetfulness, ineffective reminder methods, and medication side effects. These findings resulted in the experience of avoidable symptoms of PD if prescribed dosage and timing of medication were adhered to.

Rachel Jacobson
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June 2015

The Relationship Between Intensity of Technology Use and Levels of Empathy in College Students as Mediated by Personality Style and Attention

A previous study by Konrath, O'Brien, and Hsing (2011) indicated that empathy among college students has been declining over the past 40 years. Empathy is associated with healthy social development, altruistic behaviors, and inhibition of harmful behaviors; therefore, it is critical to investigate contributing factors to this decline. This study is the first to explore whether use of social networking sites and personal technology is related to empathy, and the possible mediating roles of narcissism, the Big-Five personality traits, and inattention. Survey responses from 317 participants were included in the data analyses. Significant negative correlations were found between the perspective-taking subscale of the empathy measure and measures of Facebook and mobile device use. A multiple linear regression analysis indicated that frequency of Facebook use and use of a phone for emails together accounted for 5% of the variance in perspective-taking scores. Although the effects were modest, the results supported the study's hypothesis that individuals with lower scores of empathy demonstrate more frequent use of mobile devices and social networking sites. Additionally, a measure of narcissism was positively correlated with mobile device/social networking site use, a measure of materialism was negatively correlated with the perspective-taking subscale, and certain undergraduate majors were associated with significantly lower levels of empathy than others. Interpretations and implications of these results are discussed.

Dorothy Kelleher
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June 2015

Transracial Adult Adoptees' Perceptions of How Their Parents Addressed Issues of Race

Historically there has been significant controversy surrounding transracial adoptions, with many experts raising concerns about White parents' ability to support the racial identity development of children of color and help them cope with racial discrimination. This study explored the experience of adult non-White adoptees retrospectively reporting on the experience of being raised by White parents. A review of the relevant research indicated a need for further inquiry with adoptees that had reached a developmental stage at which they were able to conscientiously reflect on their own development. The purpose of this study was to investigate adult transracial adoptees' perspectives on the ways their parents dealt with matters of race. It also aimed to explore how parental management of racial matters impacts adoptees' identity development and navigation of racial discrimination. This qualitative exploratory study interviewed eight transracial adoptees between the ages of 23 and 32 who had been adopted by White parents before the age of 3. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and Consensual Qualitative Research methods were used to analyze data and identify common themes. Six general domains emerged: 1) a lack of serious family discussions about race, 2) the importance of non-familial support systems, 3) developmental changes in adoptees' exploration of their birth culture and racial identity, 4) parent management of birth search decisions, 5) a sense of inclusion and belonging within the family, and 6) racial identity confusion stemming from the dichotomy between being a person of color and often feeling White. Results revealed that adoptees wished for more in-depth discussions about race and more direct guidance regarding management of discrimination. However, they were inhibited from raising the topic with their parents because of a desire to protect their parents' feelings and a belief that their parents did not have the knowledge to provide guidance. It is recommended that parents and clinicians take a proactive stance in addressing issues of race and discrimination with adoptees, and in conveying positive messages about racial pride. The findings of this research highlight the need for more extensive cultural training for adoptive parents and practitioners working with transracial families.

Matthew Kobs
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June 2015

Feasibility Study of a Self-paced Training Module in Motivational Interviewing: Helping High School Guidance Counselors Effectively Manage Student Ambivalence

This study examined the effects of a self-paced, computer-based training module in motivational interviewing (MI) for guidance counselors working with student ambivalence. High-school guidance counselors (N-5) were surveyed on job satisfaction and provided an online training in basic motivational interviewing skills. The training focused on increasing participants' ability to effectively listen, manage discordance, recognize and reinforce change talk, information exchange and planning. Participants were given the HRQ-SV, a pre- and post-test developed by the researcher that was reviewed by experts in the field of MI and guidance, and then independently rated for change in basic MI adherence. It was predicted that the training provided would have a significant effect on the participants' level of basic MI skills. Based on participant feedback and post-test scores, this method of training provided an engaging experience and resulted in a measurable amount of positive change in MI adherence that was significantly different that pre-test scores."

Kasey Lafreniere
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June 2015

Mothers and Daughters: Narratives of Sustained Connection during Adolescence

The purpose of this study was to provide an alternative lens and contribute to the application of positive psychology principles to the mother and daughter relationship during adolescence. A review of literature revealed the shift from a historical understanding of adolescence as a period of storm and stress to positive psychology's emphasis on adolescent character strengths and well-being. Currently, there is limited understanding of the mother-daughter relationship as a potential locus for intervention. The current study intended to introduce the language of character strengths and advance our understanding of the meaning of connectedness between a mother and her adolescent daughter. A qualitative Appreciative Inquiry interview methodology was utilized to encourage the lived experiences of mothers and daughters to be explored in detail. A brief linguistic and in-depth thematic analysis revealed findings in three broad categories: facilitators of connection, what mothers value in connection, and what daughters value in connection. The results suggest that one-on-one, uninterrupted time was significant to feelings of connection. For daughters, attentive listening, honesty and perspective of their mothers were important. For mothers, social intelligence and honesty were valued during experiences of connection. The results from the thematic analysis and the observed level of engagement and positive affect expressed during the interview process suggest the mother-daughter relationship as a potential locus of intervention for the promotion of well-being. Overall, the results provide reason to support a shift in the narrative of mother-daughter relationships during adolescence from separation to one of connection to enhance adolescent well-being."

Adelle Lilly
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June 2015

Facebook and Sense of Self in Emerging Adulthood

Since the creation of Facebook in 2004, Facebook has become an integral part of daily life and it is important to better understand the ways in which this social phenomenon is having an impact on how we think and feel about others and ourselves. The purpose of this study was to investigate how emerging adults use Facebook to explore core aspects of their sense of self and addressed the reciprocal relationship between the use of Facebook and sense of self as it is subjectively experienced in relation to others. This study examined the ways in which the use of Facebook is both shaped by the individual,

as well as shapes the individual's sense of self. This was a qualitative, phenomenological study. Thirteen emerging adults, ranging in age from 18-25 years, participated in semi-structured interviews regarding use of Facebook and sense of self. Two themes emerged from the data analysis process: (a) how the perceptions of others influence Facebook use, and (2) how Facebook affects view of self. Decisions about content and frequency of posts, the presentation of self, anxiety about limited control over other's perceptions, the importance of Facebook likes, using Facebook to feel a sense of recognition, the impacting of viewing other other's profiles, and the degree to which one's "real" self is portrayed on Facebook are all explored. Finally, limitations of this study and implications for future research are discussed.

Olinde Mandell
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February 2015

An Exploration of the Experience of Highly Involved Fathers in Shared-Parenting Families

Research has found that expectations of the role of the father are not static, but rather change over time in relationship to historical events, and vary in experience across father groups. While fathers in previous generations were primarily expected to fulfill traditional financial provider responsibilities, research has demonstrated an increasing expectation for father involvement in direct childcare. It has become increasingly challenging to generalize the experience of fatherhood in America, and although what it is like to be a father in America today is fascinating topic, research regarding the qualitative experience of fathers is limited overall. In particular, little is known about how increased involvement in childcare does or does not impact father identity. In an effort to more fully understand the impact of father involvement on father identity, this study looked at the subjective experiences of highly involved fathers in shared-parenting families who participated in direct childcare at least 30% and no more than 50% of the time. Additionally, this study utilized the shared-parenting family context as a comparative paradigm towards highlighting intergenerational shifts in the role of the father. A phenomenological and qualitative approach was used in an attempt to examine the experiences of 10 fathers who were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were analyzed using procedures based on interpretive phenomenological analysis methodology where superordinate and clustered themes are identified. Findings from this study include the following themes: father involvement, influences on father's parenting style, impact of becoming a father on father's identity, changes in the experience of fatherhood over time, the meaning of fatherhood, how fathers perceive their fathers, how fathers experienced their father in his parenting role, and intergenerational comparison of fathering. In addition, recommendations for future research and implications for clinical practice and training are presented."

Alyson Marx
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Recognizing and Addressing Complex Child Trauma in a Classroom Environment: Teachers Reactions to a Professional Development Workshop

The current literature on experiences of chronic trauma in childhood, or "complex trauma," reveals a range of long-lasting cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects. With children and adolescents spending a large amount of their time in schools, it is inevitable that the effects of trauma will impact their behavior and experience at school. However, the extent of training teachers are provided regarding recognizing and addressing trauma in a school context is minimal. For the this study, the researcher developed a comprehensive workshop on complex trauma and trauma-sensitive schools, deriving information from Helping Traumatized Children Learn, published by the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Lost at School by Dr. Ross Greene, and a review of the literature. This workshop was given to a group of educators currently working in Massachusetts schools. The participants provided feedback on the quality

and content of the workshop and also engaged in a dialogue on the content. The workshop was altered to incorporate the participants' feedback. In addition, five themes were derived through coding pertaining to conditions the participants believe are necessary in order to work effectively in a trauma-sensitive school environment."

Lou McDonald
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Post-traumatic Subjectivity: A Theoretical Exploration of Intersubjectivity, Mentalization and Childhood Sexual Abuse

This theoretical project seeks to explore how the emergent subjectivity of the developing child is intruded upon and altered by the occurrence of childhood sexual abuse (CSA). The analysis suggests that CSA in conjunction with normative developmental processes leads to an alteration of core capacities in both subjectivity and mentalization, evident in survivor difficulties with agency and desire. The project then considers how these alterations in capacity serve to influence and create a different developmental trajectory of survivor subjectivity, conceptualized as post-traumatic subjectivity. The conceptual model of post-traumatic subjectivity developed in this project provides a complementary way of thinking about an array of well-documented traumatogenic sequelae of CSA. The model suggests that since the child's development occurs within an ongoing intersubjective context that both includes and is mediated by CSA, this necessarily reconfigures the subjectivity of the survivor and has significant theoretical and clinical implications because CSA foundationally alters the subject's internal sense of self, namely, one's subjectivity, and what that might mean in terms of one's future capacity to feel, know, and access the self. The project uses a theoretical methodology to explore how developmental risk factors (e.g., characteristics of the holding environment, the attachment environment), in conjunction with intrapsychic, relational and intersubjective processes, and the traumatogenic occurrence of CSA lead to alterations in normative core capacities (e.g., dissociation, affectivity, mentalization). Post-traumatic subjectivity includes several altered, adaptive capacities, variants of normative subjectivity (e.g., alteration of the subject's relationship with the self, separation of agency from subjectivity, and the function of secrecy) and variants of normative mentalization (e.g., mutual dissociation, dissociated mentalization). In presenting this theoretical model of post-traumatic subjectivity, this project will hopefully suggest a way for clinicians to consider and contextualize the difficulties many adult survivors with a history of CSA experience, particularly in terms of accessing their own agency and desire. While "desire" may be an elusive concept, it is an important aspect of both subjectivity and agency.

Sue Morris
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Primary Care and the Elderly Bereaved: Implications for Medical Education

Bereavement care provided by physicians is highly variable and there is limited research to inform the development of best practice guidelines. With the aging U.S. population, where the loss of loved ones is a companion to the aging process, the elderly bereaved are a vulnerable group. In addition, the effects of bereavement are often exacerbated by the declines in mental and physical functioning associated with normal aging, and diminishing support systems. Despite increasing efforts to improve general palliative care medical education, training about bereavement care is lacking. Given the recent focus on competency-based medical education and preventive models of care for older adults, standardizing the training that medical students receive about bereavement care is needed to better prepare the physician workforce. This study aimed to explore the current practices and challenges of primary care physicians (PCPs) in caring for elderly bereaved patients leading to implications for medical education. Sixty-three PCPs completed a survey that asked about their usual bereavement practices, barriers to providing care and the type of training they received at medical school about grief and bereavement care. The participants were also asked to rate their comfort level in talking to elderly bereaved patients and their confidence

level in their ability to diagnose prolonged grief disorder (PGD). The results indicated that the majority of PCPs do not routinely screen their elderly patients for recent losses nor do they make referrals to mental health professionals or community organizations, including hospice bereavement programs. Further, those PCPs who had personally experienced the death of a significant loved one expressed feeling more comfortable talking to their elderly bereaved patients about their losses and more confident in their ability to diagnose PGD. The findings from this study are discussed with the development of medical education curricula about bereavement care in mind, paying particular attention to the psychological principle of graded exposure. It is recommended that psychologists collaborate with other educators to design and implement educational modules about bereavement care to help students and practicing physicians develop the necessary competencies required to care for the bereaved, especially the elderly bereaved.

Sarah Noyes
School Psychology
February 2015

A Program Evaluation of an Intervention Program Targeting Bystanders to Promote a Positive School Climate in a Jamaican School

A growing body of research indicates that school climate plays a significant role in the reduction of problems plaguing schools, leading to increased interest and investment from government agencies and public policy makers. This program evaluation examined a low-cost and easily implemented positive school climate intervention program, Positive Vibrations for Peace. The mixed-method design of this evaluation analyzed quantitative and qualitative data collected from participants that included students in Grades 3 to 9 (n = 714), school staff (n = 15), and program staff members (n = 2) from an All-Age school in Negril, Jamaica. The first goal of this evaluation was to determine if the improvements found during the preliminary investigation of the first two years of the program persisted through the third year of the program. The second goal was to examine differences in outcomes between the primary and secondary level students over the three years of the study. Students completed a measure of school climate at three time points: after the first, second, and third year of program implementation. School staff completed a survey measuring school climate after the third year of program implementation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted several years after the completion of the project with two members of the program staff. Results from the analyses of the quantitative measures indicated that many of the improvements in school climate outcomes identified during the preliminary investigation of the program persisted through the third and final year of the project. Additionally, statistically significant differences were found between primary and secondary level students throughout the course of the study, with primary level students reporting less violence and more pro-social interactions than secondary level students. Information gathered from interviewees indicated dramatic school climate improvements. The results from this program evaluation suggest that interventions including an overarching philosophy and support from natural leaders can effectively promote a positive school climate. Future research should explore methods for identifying and encouraging community-based natural leaders for involvement in school climate interventions.

Katherine Provencher
Clinical Psychology
February 2015

Second Chances Colorado: An Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Program for Colorado Inmate

The goal of this doctoral research was to propose an equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) program for adult males incarcerated in Colorado. The field of EAP is in its infancy in terms of research, theory, and practice. A review of this literature results in a limited number of qualitative, case study, and anecdotal examples that are methodologically weak. Most studies fail to use random assignment, control groups, or

significant sample sizes. There is even less research dedicated to EAP with inmates. The intention of this project was to develop an EAP treatment manual for Colorado inmates and propose an empirically sound method of program evaluation to promote the collection of valid, reliable, and methodologically sound outcome data. An 8-week EAP treatment manual and method for data collection was proposed and reviewed by two expert consultants. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the treatment manual. Recommendations for future research include the implementation of a pilot study that focuses on practical barriers to program implementation, collecting outcome data, and a cost-benefit analysis."

Robert Sawtelle
Clinical Psychology
February 2015

Using Bibliotherapy to Foster Caution and Self-Protection from Cyber Vulnerability in Young Adolescents

This study aimed to develop a bibliotherapy tool to foster caution and self-protection from cyber vulnerability among young adolescents. Although there are many available resources designed for adults with guidance on how to talk to children about the dangers of social media, few resources exist that are designed to be read and discussed by the children themselves. According to a growing body of literature, children are being exposed to communication technology and social media at increasingly younger ages. Additionally, unwanted consequences due to unmonitored Internet use are associated with increased psychopathology in children and adolescents. In this study, eight short stories were developed based on relevant literature and clinical vignettes. The stories were then reviewed by three expert reviewers who each had at least five years of experience working clinically with children and adolescents. The reviewers were given the stories along with an eight-item questionnaire to guide them. Feedback resulted in edits and additions to the stories, with a primary focus on making them relatable to the targeted audience and relevant to modern clinical issues. The final versions of the stories are presented in this paper. Future research should explore the development of similar types of psychoeducation and tools to foster thought and discussion among technologically active children.

Renate Schultz
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Understanding Clients' Experiences of Repaired Ruptures in the Therapeutic Relationship

Regardless of theoretical orientation, therapists generally agree that the formation and maintenance of the therapeutic alliance is one of the most essential components to successful psychotherapy. Since ruptures, or disruptions to the quality of the therapeutic alliance, can be healing for clients when resolved yet damaging when unresolved (and may negatively impact treatment outcomes), it is important to understand what contributes to a client's perception that a rupture has been successfully repaired in order to advise and train clinicians in making these repairs. Although both qualitative and quantitative research has investigated the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of therapists during ruptures and repairs, far less is known about the experience from the client's perspective. In an effort to more fully understand the experience of those most intimately involved in ruptures, this study explored clients' subjective narratives of serious therapeutic ruptures that were repaired. A phenomenological and qualitative approach was used to examine the narratives of 11 participants who were interviewed about their experiences of rupture and repair for approximately 60 minutes using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis, where superordinate and clustered themes were identified. Findings from the study identified several major themes related to the therapy before the rupture, the nature of the rupture event, and characteristics of a successful resolution. Within these superordinate themes, other themes included the

multi-determined nature of serious ruptures, ruptures as either boundary violations or miscommunications, and the intensely negative feelings ruptures caused for clients. Furthermore, the study explored several client-centered, therapist-centered, and relationship-centered factors that clients identified as having been critical to repairing these serious ruptures. In addition, recommendations for future research and implications for clinical practice are presented.

Gal Sivan
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

A Conceptualization of Grandiosity

The term "grandiosity" is used to describe a set of behaviors in a variety of clinical and subclinical diagnoses without a shared agreement on the meaning of the concept itself. Disagreement and confusion in the use of this term is reflected in a corresponding confusion regarding the concept's use in theory and clinical practice. The variety of grandiose presentations in affective states and character pathology, and the overlap with narcissistic and omnipotent presentations, make clarification of these nuanced differences necessary. The two most commonly identified presentations of grandiosity are the grandiose ideation and grandiose delusion. These differ in the level of impairment to reality perception, level of stability and conviction, and level of disruption in function. Evidence-based models of the etiology of grandiosity suggest that grandiosity functions as a defense and/or as a mood congruent experience. Psychodynamic theoretical frameworks include rich accounts of grandiosity and related concepts. Reviewing the variety of etiologies these theories offer to the understanding of grandiosity was an integral focus of this paper. The theoretical literature suggests that grandiosity appears early in development, as a normative experience, and is gradually replaced with a more realistic understanding of one's environment. The appearance of grandiosity later in life may indicate impairment in ego or self-development, and therefore a pathological state.

Similar to the confusion found in the reviewed empirical and clinical data, the theoretical exploration highlighted a conceptual confusion and overlap between grandiosity and related concepts such as omnipotence, narcissism and entitlement. The objective of this paper was to present grandiosity more clearly while recognizing the inherent confusions. The end product is a description of the common elements of grandiosity across clinical presentations. Additionally, etiological paths contributing to the development and maintenance of grandiosity were explored."

Rebecca Stacy
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

A Study of The Unique Stressors and Burnout Among Subspecialties in Clinical Psychology

This study used a survey method with the following measures to identify general and unique stress factors leading to burnout in subspecialties in psychology: Maslach Burnout Inventory- Human Services Survey, 3rd edition (MBI-HS), Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21), Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS), and The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ). Participants were also asked to identify their work setting, hours worked, subspecialty, type of employment, unique stressors, and coping skills. T-tests and post-hoc analyses were used to analyze results. A total of 206 psychologists were analyzed in the current study (106 clinical/counseling psychologists, 40 forensic psychologists, and 60 neuropsychologists). Results identified general and unique stressors of subspecialties within clinical psychology. Analysis found psychologists face various challenges depending on workplace and subspecialty. For example, clinical/counseling psychologists reported poor benefits as a unique stressor more often than forensic psychologists; forensic psychologists reported working with difficult clients and security issues were unique stressors more so than for clinical/counseling psychologists; and neu-

ropsychologists reported having large caseloads and high no-show rates were unique stressors more so than for forensic or clinical/counseling psychologists. Recommendations for future research include larger sample size, use of narrative, and clarification for psychologists working in more than one setting. These additions will contribute to the existing body of literature as well as provide more specific information to research on burnout.

Elizabeth Stilwell
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Social Media: A Dynamic Risk Factor For Adolescent Male Aggression

The purpose of this doctoral project is to better understand the complicated dynamics that appear to exist between adolescent social media use and offline interpersonal relationships, particularly as it relates to online provocation and real world aggressive behavior. This is an exploratory study aimed at obtaining first-hand accounts of how adolescent males account for physical aggression in response to online experiences, the contributing emotional factors, and the influence of the online audience. This study employed a qualitative design using both a survey and vignettes to collect data. Data was collected from 15 adolescent males who ranged in age from 14 to 16. Data was analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach. Themes that emerged from the data included, among others, the magnification of conflict occurring on social media and the loss of control over impression management. This project was intended to be a starting point of exploration and to contribute to the future development of violence intervention programs.

Inez Strama
Clinical Psychology
February 2015

Deconstructing the American Dream: Exploring Ethnic Identity and Subjective Social Status in 1.5-Generation Immigrants

The purpose of this study was to explore how individuals who immigrate to the U.S. as children (the 1.5-generation) perceive their ethnic identity (ID) and social class, and to investigate the relationship of these two variables. The literature reviewed revealed that no research has focused exclusively on this particular immigrant generation's subjective social status (SSS), as distinct from other generational cohorts. Grounded in intersectionality theory, the study employed a mixed methods design and collected data through a self-report online survey. A diverse sample of 124 adults who immigrated to the U.S. at or before age 15 was recruited. Demographic information, including data about ethnic ID and the American Dream (AD), as well as rankings on the MacArthur Scale of SSS (both currently and retrospectively at the time of immigration), were collected and analyzed inferentially. Qualitative data was collected to assess participants' own opinions about ethnic ID, social class, and the relationship between them. Results indicated that participants tended to identify multiculturally, but as fully belonging to "neither" their cultures/countries of origin "nor" the U.S. Taken together with findings that participants conceptualized class and class mobility as related to capital, a sense of opportunity, and immigrant status, the relationship between ethnic ID and class was posited to be moderated by seven different variables, all related to how immigrants, especially those of marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds, are perceived and received by mainstream U.S. culture. The importance of conducting future research on how such perceptions are internalized is highlighted. Implications for professional practice are also provided.

Herlinda Tin
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Exploring Interpersonal Relations in the Context of Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma among Guatemalans

This study explored the Core Conflictual Relationship Theme (CCRT) components [Wish (W), Response from Others (RO), Response of Self (RS)], and identifiable themes in the context of intergenerational transmission of trauma. It sought greater

insight into the messages that are transmitted through generations, in particular the messages of caregivers, who experienced the Civil War in Guatemala, to their U.S.-born charges. Eight U.S.-born adults participated in the study; each of these had caregivers that resided in Guatemala during that country's Civil War (1960-1996). The researcher utilized the Relationship Anecdote Paradigm (RAP) interview method to elicit narratives in relation to their caregivers. A CCRT approach and a discovery oriented analysis of these narratives highlighted common themes of the participants' experiences with their caregivers. The findings identified the participants' most frequent W as "to be loved and understood," "to assert self and be independent," and "to achieve and help others." The most frequent ROs were "likes me," "upset," and "understanding." The most frequent RSs were "disappointed and depressed," "helpful," and "helpless." Additionally, the participants shared the following themes: caregivers' willingness to reveal their personal histories; the importance of education; and participants' awareness of the messages transmitted by their caregivers. The research concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the work, recommendations for future research, and implications for clinical work related to the charges of Guatemalan Civil War trauma survivors.

Rebecca Turturro
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Easing the Transition to School While Learning a New Language: A Bilingual Children's Book

The purpose of this doctoral project was to develop a children's book targeted at the transition to school for Spanish-speaking, prekindergarten through first grade students in the United States. The intended goal was to ease the stress of the school transition, increase communication in the classroom and at home about this transition, and foster child development through early learning of emotion words and self-regulation strategies. The methods used involved researching normative child development, school related stressors for students, benefits of social and emotional learning, and the utility of bibliotherapy. The storyline was developed based upon this research, and experts in education and mental health were consulted to review the initial text. Feedback from reviewers was incorporated into the final version of the text and illustrations were developed to animate the story. Results showed that a small cohort of teachers and mental health providers found the text to be age appropriate and applicable to the experiences of many Latino children starting school in the United States.

Elaine Veracruz
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Examining the Intergenerational Tranmission of Child Physical Abuse in a U.S. Sample

The purpose of this study was to examine the intergenerational continuity of childhood physical abuse in a U.S. sample. The study replicated a study that was conducted in Japan to determine if cross-national differences exist.

Methods: Data come from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (n = 4102), a U.S. population-based sample of adults. Logistic regression models assessed associations among 12 childhood adversities and physical abuse perpetration adjusting for history of mental disorders and socioeconomic status.

Results: Childhood adversities related to maladaptive family functioning (e.g. parent criminality, parent mental disorders, sexual abuse) directly and indirectly predict physical abuse perpetration in adulthood. Only two of the maladaptive family functioning variables - child physical abuse and parent criminality - directly predicted child physical abuse perpetration. The indirect pathway linking childhood adversities to physical abusive parenting was through anxiety and impulse-control disorders. Findings differed from the study conducted in Japan which found that child physical abuse was the only significant predictor of physical abuse perpetration in adulthood.

Conclusion: In the U.S. assessment of childhood exposure to family related adversities may help to identify individuals at particularly high risk of physical abuse perpetration and to guide prevention efforts. Study findings also highlight the importance for future research to consider the complex individual, familial, cultural, and environmental context in which child physical abuse most often occurs and how the combined effect of these factors shape an individual's development over time."

Michele Zager
Clinical Psychology
June 2015

Alexithymia, Affect Intensity, and Correlations with Interpersonal Functioning and Relationships among Undergraduate Visual Art Students at Institutions of Art and Design

This study aimed to increase understanding of the emotional and interpersonal experiences of undergraduate art and design students using the lens of alexithymia. Alexithymia is a diminished capacity to differentiate emotional states, use words to communicate feelings, analyze and explain emotional arousal, feel emotionally stimulated, and fantasize. This study examined the dimensions of alexithymia, factors of affect intensity, and interpersonal problems of 536 full-time undergraduate students studying at institutions of art and design across the United States. Both students in the fine arts and in the design and applied arts demonstrated significantly more difficulty than a previous sample of US college students in their ability to identify and communicate their emotions. However, comparatively, they did not demonstrate difficulty becoming emotionally aroused and demonstrated greater ability to fantasize. Although art and design students demonstrated significant difficulties in the cognitive treatment of their emotions, on a scale of affect intensity they demonstrated greater intensity of emotional experiences along some factors. Students' deficit in identifying emotions was found to relate with negative affect intensity and deficits verbalizing emotions was found to relate with lower scores of positive affect. Less difficulty experiencing emotional arousal also was related to experiences of greater intensity for negative affect. Some significant differences were noted between students studying within the fine arts and those studying within design or applied arts, between male and female students, between domestic students and international students, and between students based on psychotherapy history. The sample of art and design students also reported significantly higher levels of total interpersonal distress than the previous US college sample. The interpersonal problem of social avoidance was determined to be the most elevated pattern among art and design students, followed by interpersonal distance and lack of affiliation, and non-assertive and submissive patterns. Significant relationships were found between some of the alexithymia dimensions and interpersonal problems. Implications for therapists and student affairs professionals were generated from the data and connected to previous literature emphasizing insecure attachment patterns and personality types. The research promotes future studies focusing upon the population of art and design students.

Cassandra Aasmundsen
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Role of Protective Factors against Burnout in Mental Health Workers Employed in Psychiatric Inpatient Units and Residential Programs

Burnout, or the long-term product of occupational stress, is a phenomenon that has taken a heavy toll on individuals working within the mental health field, impacting the physical and mental health of employees, their organizations and the ability to effectively care for patients' well-being. Although there is extensive research on burnout, less focus has been directed towards factors that protect one from burnout, or the experience of burnout across various mental health settings and with different mental health employees. To address these gaps, this study focused on examining the experience of mental health workers employed in intense and high risk mental health environments. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the experience of men-

tal health workers employed within residential programs and inpatient hospitals, in order to elucidate protective factors against the risk and development of burnout. The study employed a qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze data collected through face-to-face interviews. Results of the study showed that participants who were able to weather and recover from burnout shared similar individual, social and organizational factors. Of these factors, social support from coworkers, supervisors and outside peers, was found to be integral in protecting participants against burnout, highlighting that burnout is embedded in a social context. Additionally, participants found to be resistant to burnout were found to possess a combination of individual traits such as hardiness, flexibility, and consistency. Lastly, participants set and maintained appropriate boundaries between their home and work lives and stressed the importance of self-care in preventing and reducing symptoms of burnout. Conclusions of the study pointed to the importance of creating a supportive work environment, which encourages appreciation and acknowledgment of hard work, provides supervision that fosters professional development, and allows employees to maintain a sense of self-efficacy in navigating the system. In order to benefit from the protective factors and tendencies of individuals who have remained resistant to burnout, introductory trainings highlighting the symptoms and consequences of burnout, providing occasional opportunities to engage in burnout reducing activities and ensuring that employees have role clarity and are not overextended by organizational challenges are important. Raising awareness and creating such opportunities, are the first steps in protecting mental health workers from developing symptoms of burnout as a result of occupational stress and emotional overextension.

Jordan Backstrom
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

A Descriptive Psychology Account of Patient-Centered Medicine and the Chronic Pain Patient

This project is a conceptual analysis of Patient-Centered Medicine with a focus on its practical implications for integrating care of the chronic pain patient. Specifically, it utilizes the tools of Descriptive Psychology to describe a conceptual framework for understanding and treating chronic pain patients in a patient-centered way. I argue that the underlying conceptual framework for the Biopsychosocial model is conceptually vague, leading to a fragmented theory and practice of Patient-Centered Medicine. I offer that these specific shortcomings may be emended by utilizing the conceptual framework for a person-centered science supplied by Descriptive Psychology, most especially with the tools of a Paradigm Case Formulation of Patient-Centered Medicine and a Parametric Analysis of the chronic pain patient. This project contributes to the field of psychology, and particularly the field of health psychology, by more precisely locating the relevance of Descriptive Psychology and its conceptual contributions to science and the clinical method for treating patients who present with chronic pain.

Rachel Callanan
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Improving Psychological Testing Report Recommendation Adherence for Underserved Child Clients at the Brenner Center

The present study examines test-report recommendation adherence for former underserved child clients at the Brenner Center. Previous research explored recommendation adherence in the general population as well as at an ADHD evaluation clinic. However, there have not been studies that specifically investigate underserved child clients. Since underserved populations struggle to obtain quality services in various settings, it is important to understand the reasoning behind this phenomenon in order to remedy it. Ultimately, it is essential to close the service gap for underserved populations to ensure equal access to care. The purpose of the current study is to analyze barriers to recommendation adherence according to the parents/guardians of underserved child

clients in an in-depth manner. Five parents/guardians volunteered to participate after receiving a solicitation letter, an Informed Consent, and an interview scheduling call. In order to accomplish the goal of examining recommendation adherence and barriers, the Modified Adherence Telephone Interview Form was utilized to capture survey data, and open-response questions were added to gather more detail-rich information from the parents/guardians. Demographic data, likert-scale data, and open-response data were obtained. The open-response data was analyzed using thematic analysis, in which the researcher examined trends and patterns that emerged from the participants' responses. The themes that emerged were resource availability, school involvement/cooperation, advocacy, parental frustration, locus of control, and time as an impediment. Resource availability also appeared as a common barrier to recommendation adherence in the likert-scale data. In particular, resources within the school systems appeared to hinder follow-through on school-based recommendations. The results suggest a need to further study recommendation adherence in underserved child populations. Future research might focus particularly on school-based recommendation implementation, and the possible need for an advocate or ombudsperson in assessment centers to work directly with the schools.

Ember Coredini
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Influence of Gender and Couple Configuration on Division of Parenting Tasks, Parental Role Flexibility, and Sense of Competence in the Transition to Parenthood"

The transition to parenthood includes specific changes, stressors, and challenges for new parents, with same-sex parents experiencing additional and unique risks. Yet little is known of resilience factors utilized by same-sex parents and differences compared to opposite-sex parents. The current study explored the division of parenting tasks, parental role flexibility, and sense parenting of competence, across four couple configuration groups using an online survey. The research sample included 111 primarily white, well educated, and geographically diverse new parents (35 Lesbian Female, 50 Straight Female, 14 Straight Male, and 12 Gay Males). One-way ANOVAs' and regression analysis were utilized to measure for group effects and predictive values for variables. Results were in line with previous research and found significant differences between the four couple configuration groups. Straight Females reported completing the most parenting tasks and being the least satisfied with the division. Gay Males and Lesbian Females indicated the most equal sharing of parenting tasks and relatively high satisfaction with this division. Straight Males indicated the lowest levels of parenting competence, self-efficacy, and satisfaction). Lesbian Females indicated the highest levels in both their overall parenting competence and parenting satisfaction. Gay Males indicated very similar levels as Lesbian Females and the highest levels in regards to parenting self-efficacy. Significant effect was not found regarding parental role flexibility, although confusion regarding this measure may have been a factor. Results highlight that both gender and sexual orientation act in conjunction with each other as variables that inform parent's experiences in the transition to parenthood. Additional research is needed to validate these findings given the limitations in sample size and generalizability.

Mark Depot
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

An Exploration of Factors Related to Use and Parent Perceptions of Effectiveness for Sensory Integration Intervention with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Sensory integration (SI) intervention continues to be popular among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) despite limited empirical evidence for the intervention. This lack of evidence could be attributed to the fact that many

studies that measure the efficacy of SI intervention have lacked rigorous methodology, while others have examined isolated sensory-based strategies rather than a true SI approach. The current study used a survey method to explore parent experiences with SI intervention. Participants included parents and caregivers of children diagnosed with ASD. The survey asked participants about child and family demographics, involvement in SI intervention, perceptions of the effectiveness of SI intervention, and other information related to diagnosis and family values. Data was analyzed using parametric hypothesis testing and simple linear regression. Results indicated that factors predicting higher ratings of perceived effectiveness of SI intervention included the absence of a sensory processing disorder label, higher levels of optimism about the child's prognosis, and higher reported levels of knowledge about SI intervention. The study also provided evidence that contradicted many claims in the literature about the influence of other factors including cost of treatment, family resources, and severity of disability.

Zachary Faas
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Elementary School Psychologists' Experiences with School-Based Bullying Prevention and Intervention Efforts

In 2010, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed legislation requiring all schools to develop and implement Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans (BPIP). The present study was a qualitative exploration of the experiences of school psychologists who work with and have responsibilities for implementing these BPIPs. Eight school psychologists who were currently practicing in Massachusetts public elementary schools participated in the study.

Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and a semi-structured, in-person qualitative interview designed to gather information about their experiences with, and beliefs about bullying and prevention and intervention efforts, and the state of bullying and prevention and intervention efforts at their school(s). Participants were also asked what they saw as the obstacles to the successful implementation of anti-bullying programs, as well as what they thought would help improve anti-bullying efforts in their school systems.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis to analyze participant responses and identify common themes. A major finding involved participating school psychologists' belief in the importance of engaging in bullying prevention and intervention work at the elementary school level. The researcher also identified significant findings related to factors the participants associated with effective prevention and intervention efforts, major challenges to effective implementation of prevention and intervention efforts, and their suggestions for improving prevention and intervention efforts in schools.

The discussion chapter provides interpretations of the significance of the major findings, addresses strengths and limitations of the present study, and recommendations for future research. The researcher concludes by presenting implications for psychological and educational practice and implications for educational policy. All participants' responses generally reflected a lack of buy-in to prevention and intervention efforts from various stakeholders in the school system. Some of the recommendations include: increasing the allocation of time and funding to prevention and intervention efforts and increasing professional development opportunities for school staff in order to improve prevention and intervention efforts. The researcher also suggests increased opportunities and forums for solution-focused communication between school psychologists may lead to improved prevention and intervention efforts at individual schools.

Kaleigh Flanagan
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Relationship Of Masculinity-Femininity, Internalized Homonegativity, And Visibility Management

Efforts to manage visibility of sexual orientation status (i.e., visibility management) are associated with stigma-related depression, poorer social cohesion, and higher levels of distress; therefore, it is critical to investigate contributing factors associated with visibility management. Both self-perceived masculinity-femininity and internalized homonegativity are linked to visibility management, but never have the relationships between these variables been studied across gender. This study was the first to explore whether several measures of self-perceived masculinity-femininity were related to visibility management in both lesbian and gay individuals, and the possible mediating role of internalized homonegativity. Survey responses from 88 women and 87 men were included in the data analyses. Multiple linear regression analyses sorted by gender indicated internalized homonegativity and self-perceived masculinity made up 19.7% of the visibility management variance amongst male respondents. There was a significant positive correlation between self-perceived masculinity and internalized homonegativity. Contrary to the hypothesis of this researcher, gay men who rated themselves higher on certain measures of self-perceived masculinity also rated themselves as more out or less restrictive in their visibility management. Internalized homonegativity and self-perceived femininity made up 29.4% of the visibility management variance amongst female respondents. The higher female participants rated themselves on stereotypically masculine traits, the more visible they rated themselves in regards to their sexual orientation, and this relationship was mediated by internalized homonegativity. Additionally, certain measures of femininity were positively correlated with visibility management. There was a significant negative correlation between internalized homonegativity and visibility management across gender. Interpretations and implications of these results are discussed.

Stacey Goldstein-Dwyer
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Current Provider Knowledge and Practices in the Treatment of Sexual Offending

An in-depth review of the literature discussing sex offenders and treatment of sexual offending behavior reflected a reality that sexual recidivism among sex offenders and the impact of sex offending on victims and the community is significant. However, little is known about what current sex offender-experienced providers know about this population or the interventions they are using. Thus, it was the hope of this study, using an on-line survey, to demonstrate whether the level of specificity exists in therapist knowledge base to conduct effective therapy, in addition to various other secondary questions. To investigate, a mixed method study using an on-line survey was administered to three groups of psychotherapists, including: 1) psychotherapists who deliver services in a correctional setting; 2) psychotherapists who deliver sex offender specific services in the community; and 3) general psychotherapists who do not offer services to the sex offender population. Various procedures were utilized (One-way ANOVA, Post Hoc test, T-test, Cross Tabulation, and Bivariate Correlation) for analyses. Significant group differences identified community therapists as the most knowledge about sex offenders. Additionally, results indicated that therapists are using evidenced based interventions to treat this population.

Erica Healey
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

An Examination of Psychological Well-being in an Employee Wellness Program, Be Fit

Obesity is a chronic disease associated with a host of physical, emotional, and economic consequences. The prevalence of obesity has been on an upward trajectory requiring strategic and comprehensive intervention. Current guidelines recommend weight loss

to reduce the risks associated with being overweight and obese. While some people have success with weight management, others continue to struggle and experience subsequent psychological complications. The objective of this doctoral project was to determine if participation in a 10-week, voluntary worksite nutrition and exercise program improves psychological well-being and global health status. The study applied quantitative analysis of archival data collected during the quasi-experimental study Be Fit. A sample of 711 study participant records was examined with a pretest posttest analysis. The two primary outcome measures were the SOS-10 measure of psychological well-being, and the SF-12 measure of global health status. Participants completed survey measures and provided total body weight measurements at baseline, end of program (week-10), and 1-year follow-up. Results showed a significant increase in psychological well-being and global health scores from baseline to end of program across all participants. Weight loss was not associated with changes in psychological well-being scores during the program. However, at 1-year follow-up, participants who lost weight improved psychological well-being while those who did not lose weight, or gained, had a decline in scores. Comparing baseline psychological well-being, scores for program non-completers tended to be lower than scores for program completers. Findings from this study demonstrated that participation in a worksite wellness program improves psychological well-being and global health status during the program, but maintenance strategies are needed for continued progress.

Nadia Insanally
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Therapists' Experience of Client Blame with Adult Survivors of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Study

This study was a qualitative examination of the subjective experience of how therapists manage issues of assigning blame and responsibility towards survivors of sexual assault. The majority of research about the assignment of blame and responsibility has been told from the survivors' perspective. This current study was conducted to hear about therapists' attitudes regarding sexual assault and how managing blame impacts the therapeutic alliance from the therapist's perspective by responding to qualitative open-ended questions.

Seven female therapists and two male therapists of various theoretical orientations and years of experience participated in the one-on-one interviews. The present study found meaningful themes in order to understand what factors therapists consider when thinking about assigning blame and responsibility towards patients. Therapists in the sample acknowledged many complexities about their patient's histories and environmental contexts. While none of the therapists explicitly verbalized that they attributed blame towards their patients for somehow participating in their assaults, some therapists explored how substance use and poor decision making played a role in how they understood why and how patients were assaulted.

Due to considering so many complexities, the results demonstrated that the therapists in this sample did not indicate that they blamed or did not blame their patients for being assaulted. Rather, it appeared that they all struggled in some way to hold the complexity of how their patients participated in events, how present context and past history played a role in what they experienced and how therapists sought to use their patient's experiences to help their patients understand more about themselves. This study provided a basis for future research exploring therapists' attribution of blame and responsibility towards adult survivors of sexual assault in relation to considering patient's historical and environmental contexts.

Briana Johannesen
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Confirmation Bias in the Evaluation of Children's Projective Drawings

This project focuses on the concept of confirmation bias in the evaluation of children's projective drawings. The intention of this study is to explore how clinicians are currently using projective drawings and whether they can be biased in their evaluation of the drawings. Current literature in the field discusses the tendency for clinicians to be biased in which diagnoses they give a client based on previous information they obtain about the client. Often, clinicians use assessments such as drawings as part of a diagnostic testing battery, but there is mixed research in the literature about proper ways to evaluate projective drawings as well as the overall usefulness of using drawings as an assessment tool. The method of this study included presenting drawings to clinicians that were paired with either no history, an inaccurate history, or an accurate history, and assess for any differences in diagnostic inferences made for the drawings in each condition. Results indicate clinicians have inconsistent methods for interpreting drawings, and are willing to draw diagnostic conclusions based on drawings alone. Clinicians showed a tendnecy to be biased in their diagnostic impression either by particular drawing features or by a child's history. These results are helpful for clinicians in the field using drawings, and shed some light on clinician's occasional tendency to over-diagnose.

Bryan Koesler
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

An Exploratory Study of the Clinical Applications of Lucid Dreaming

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential benefits of lucid dreaming by initiating exploration into its effect(s) on mood in non-clinical populations. The study was divided into two parts. The first part included the administration of a one-time survey to a wide range of subjects (n = 30) that assessed the relationship between lucid dreaming, mood (Fordyce Emotions Questionnaire, Who (Five) Well-Being Index, and Penn State Worry Questionnaire), sleep-quality (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index), and mindfulness (Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale). The second part of the study included the administration of a pre and post-test survey to a smaller sample of subjects (n = 4) and, in addition, taught them Mnemonic Induced Lucid Dreaming (MILD) as well as monitor their progress daily. MILD is a lucid dreaming induction technique that was utilized towards examining the overall goal of the proposed study. Results indicated a positive correlation between lucid dreaming and mood as measured by the Who (Five) Well-Being Index although results did not indicate any other significant relationship. The sample was not representative of the general population especially due to its size, which makes these results only suggestive. Nevertheless, these findings have important implications in that they further shine a light on the potential use of lucid dreaming in the psychotherapeutic context.

Summer Langley
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

An Examination of Jurisdictional Practices for Juvenile Competence to Stand Trial Remediation Services

Similar to adult defendants, youth who have been found incompetent to stand trial are often provided services to remediate competence abilities. Although adult competence to stand trial and restoration are frequently studied areas, information regarding juvenile remediation is largely unavailable (the term "remediation" is more commonly used when referring to juvenile competence as youth may not have been competent prior to the evaluation, therefore, "restoring" competence may be inappropriate terminology). A survey was designed and administered to members of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, Forensic Division, or their designees, to gather juvenile remediation information. Participants provided information regarding juvenile competency evaluations, remediation services, legal educational services, remediation time frames and outcomes. Study results showed that 64 percent of the 28 jurisdictions surveyed provided remediation services to incompetent juvenile

defendants (n = 18). Of the states that recognized developmental immaturity as a distinct factor for juvenile incompetence (n = 13), one jurisdiction reported youth are provided services specifically aimed at remediating incompetence due to immaturity. Of the various remediation services provided (e.g., psychiatric medication management, individual and/or group therapy), 83 percent of jurisdictions provided additional legal educational services to incompetent youth (n = 15). Further results showed that in 2012, 57 percent of youth provided remediation services were successfully remediated to competence. While the majority of participants who completed the survey represented jurisdictions with remediation services, the overall number of U.S. states that provide services is likely to be lower than reflected in this statistic (64%). Furthermore, while close to half of the jurisdictions surveyed recognized developmental immaturity (46%, n = 13), nearly all did not provide services targeted at treating this underlying cause of incompetence (92%, n = 12). The findings of this study suggests that more information is needed to understand the efficacy of current remediation practices on youth found incompetent, particularly with regard to developmental immaturity.

Oren Lee-Parritz
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Asessing Mentalization: Toward Construct Validation Of Mental State Discourse Analysis As Applied To The Thematic Apperception Test

This project intended to devise a measure to assess levels of mentalization. Mentalization is understood as the capacity to understand one's self or others as products of mental states. Using archival data from 63 undergraduates, this study applied Mental State Discourse (MSD) analysis (Symons et al. 2005) to TAT protocols. MSD analysis involves coding speech for the frequency of mental state references relative to other types of references. In order to validate this method, this study compared the ratios of mental state discourse to indicators of overall mental health and effective interpersonal function that would have been theoretically expected to be associated with intact mentalization. After running linear analyses between MSD and the validating variables, surprising results were found. Specifically, while statistical significance was reached for only a few of the variables, nearly all relationships were in the opposite direction of what was predicted. This study then applied a post-hoc quadratic regression analysis to explore whether a curvilinear relationship might better explain the relationship between TMS and the key variables.

Sarit Lesser
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Development of the Maternal Caregiving System Within a Matrix of Tensions, Culture, and Context: A Qualitative Study of New Mothers

The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of the maternal caregiving system, within a cultural framework that involves context and circumstances. In particular, this investigation focused on the processes of how mothers find meaning in the context of the dialectical tensions they experience. This study was conducted qualitatively, by implementing a phenomenological method. Ten volunteer new mothers were interviewed and completed a questionnaire.

The results correspond with Oberman and Josselson's (1996) "matrix of tensions." All the women in the study reported difficulties and tensions in the process of becoming caregivers. However, all women were able, within various degrees of adaptation, to navigate these tensions, negotiate tradeoffs and compromises, make meaning of their experiences, and integrate this new caregiving system into their existing identity structure. In addition, the decisions the women made about how much of themselves they were able or willing to invest in their infants were contingent on their circumstances, cultural values, and context.

Analysis of the data was presented within four categories: (a) Dialectical Tensions, Struggles, and Conflictual Experiences, (b) Ecological and Historical Circumstances, (c), Balancing Tensions: Negotiating Tradeoffs and Compromises, and finally, (d) Meaning and Meaning Making Processes.

A new model for the development of the maternal caregiving system was presented. In this model, Maternal Caregiving is established in four main stages: (a) Activation, (b) Initiation, (c) Development, and (d) Integration, including one mediating stage: Meaning Making processes. Within these stages the woman gradually develops a connection and a relationship with her baby and undergoes a qualitative shift in perception of herself, her baby, and the world.

Brian Lieberman
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Culturally Modified Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression Among Hispanic College Students: A Demonstration Study

A paucity of research exists on cultural adaptations of evidence-based psychotherapy treatments such as IPT with Hispanic individuals presenting with symptoms of major depression. Culturally Modified Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression among Hispanic College Students (CMIPT-HCS) was developed, in consultation with experts in the fields of college counseling, Hispanic mental health/cultural values, and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT), to address this deficit. CMIPT-HCS is a manualized intervention that incorporates common Hispanic cultural values and sociocultural stressors, including: acculturative stress, intergenerational conflict, ethnic identity exploration, and intragroup marginalization. IPT's interpersonal problem areas have been modified to address issues of acculturation. In CMIPT-HCS these problem areas have been titled Role Transitions associated with Acculturation and Interpersonal Role Disputes associated with Acculturation. These problem areas will serve as the focus of treatment in the cultural modification of IPT for Hispanic college students presenting with symptoms of depression.

Expert consultants indicated that CMIPT-HCS has potential utility in college counseling centers as a practical, short-term intervention based on an evidence-based treatment. Feedback included: the incorporation of two additional Hispanic cultural values - simpatía and personalismo; the addition of two IPT techniques - interpersonal skills building and work-at-home (Clougherty et al., 2014); and suggestions on how to more effectively recruit Hispanic college students into group treatment.

In conclusion, in order to establish the preliminary benefits of CMIPT-HCS, pilot studies are needed.

Jennifer Mazier
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Curriculum for In-Home Therapy: A Demonstration Project

There is a body of literature demonstrating the need for graduate training curriculum that appropriately addresses the skills and aspects needed to strengthen the effectiveness of In-Home Therapy and thus, Community-Based Work. Surprisingly, despite the research highlighting such a need, there is a lack of meeting this need to bridge the gap between theory and practice and furthermore between academics and work experience. This project will journey through the history of Community Psychology and Social Work, along with discussing evidence-based therapeutic approaches in laying the foundation to support the need for curriculum-based training in addressing the complex issues that arise within the work. This project will propose a model curriculum for In-Home Therapy to begin addressing the complexity as the field moves from traditional, office settings to home and community.

Jennifer Minogue
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Subjective Experience of Recovery from Serious Mental Illness in Younger and Older Adults

The purpose of this study was to investigate how individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) subjectively experience recovery. For this study, participants were recruited from various Massachusetts Clubhouses, which are community-based vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation centers that serve individuals with SMI. Participants included 172 individuals with SMI, ranging in age from 20 to 80 years old. A quantitative research design utilized the Mental Health Recovery Measure (MHRM) (Young & Bullock, 2003) as a measure of overall subjective experience of recovery, to determine if there is a difference between younger and older adults (age 50 and older) with SMI. Various sub-hypotheses related to the MHRM were also proposed. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the two age groups would not differ in their scores of behaviors related to recovery (i.e., the Basic Functioning domain). However, older adults were predicted to score significantly lower on domains targeting attitudes related to recovery (i.e., Self-Empowerment, New Potential, and Spirituality). Other independent variables, including the year of first hospitalization and level of education were also hypothesized to impact the MHRM scores. The hypotheses were tested using two-tailed t-tests and despite adequate power to find effects if they had existed, they failed to reveal any statistically significant differences between younger and older adults on the MHRM. Additionally, the year of an individual's first psychiatric hospitalization or level of education did not appear to impact one's score on the MHRM. Of note, the mean of the current sample recruited from Clubhouse programs was found to be statistically higher than the (2009) MHRM normed mean (M=78) (T .05, 171 = 1.973 < t = 6.038). The results are discussed in terms of both future clinical and research implications.

Dana Oertel
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Motivating Change Through the Assessment Process: A Training Manual for Practicum Level Students Learning Neuropsychological Assessment

The purpose of this demonstration project is to create a manual for practicum level students studying neuropsychological assessment. The manual will focus on providing guidelines and strategies for effective neuropsychological assessment in a collaborative, strengths-based manner. Although psychological assessment remains a focus in academic coursework and the teaching of neuropsychological assessment has increased over the past decade, courses tend to concentrate on the scoring and interpretation of the various measures rather than the elucidation of the full neuropsychological assessment and feedback process. There seems to be less emphasis on the feedback process and how it can be used as a therapeutic intervention. This feedback can have significant implications of both a positive and negative nature. An individual's life can be dramatically changed following an assessment and students must be prepared to take on this role and feel confident in doing so. A rationale for the manual is provided following an extensive review of literature including the history of psychological assessment, therapeutic approaches to assessment, neuropsychological assessment, motivational interviewing, and current training practices of graduate programs in psychology.

Aladdin Ossorio
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Personhood and Caregiving for People with Neurocognitive Disorders: A Descriptive Psychology Approach

Several tools of Descriptive Psychology are used to outline a person-centered model for describing the behavior of people with neurocognitive disorders and for generating targeted caregiver response behaviors. To achieve this, the history of personhood is

briefly presented, the contributions of several contemporary thinkers on personhood, aging, and dementia are outlined, and a range of relevant Descriptive Psychology tools are reviewed, including the concepts of Person, Behavior and World, the Paradigm Case Formulation, and the Parametric Analysis.

Lauren Parker
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Impact of Expressing Gratitude on the Well-Being of Individuals with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

The primary goal for individuals hospitalized with schizophrenia spectrum disorders is the rapid stabilization of symptoms with the use of psychopharmacologic medications; however, recovery is not solely the eradication of problems, it is the fostering of a person's well-being. Positive psychology is an empirically based approach to treatment that bolsters well-being for various populations but individuals with schizophrenia spectrum disorders have been neglected in the research. This study adapted a gratitude letter writing exercise for these individuals in a psychiatric hospital. Two individuals were assigned to the gratitude letter writing exercise and a third individual completed a control exercise. Their overall well-being, positive relationships with others, experience of gratitude, and psychiatric symptoms were assessed at baseline, post-intervention, and at a one month follow-up. The findings support that this intervention can be used in a psychiatric hospital and may have a relationship with increasing the experiences of positive relationships and gratitude. More research is needed to support the implementation of positive psychology interventions in psychiatric hospitals to foster the well-being of these individuals.

Meredith Ronan
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Neuropsychological Functioning in Adults with Histories of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury: An Examination of Executive Functioning

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is a clinical issue that has gained increased awareness and research in recent years. However, the majority of the research has focused on self-report data in adolescent populations. To date, there have been only a few studies examining objective data with individuals who self-injure. Neuropsychological functioning has not yet been investigated among inpatient adults who have a history of non-suicidal self-injury. The purpose of this study was to compare neuropsychological functioning, specifically executive functioning, of inpatient adults with a history of NSSI compared to a matched sample of adults without NSSI. Given the paucity of research in this area, the project also examined qualitative data about NSSI behaviors, suicidality, and information regarding psychiatric and substance abuse diagnoses. The study reviewed archival records of 196 individuals who had completed a neuropsychological evaluation within a ten-year period. The sample consisted of 21 men and women whose intake psychiatric or psychosocial assessment indicated two or more episodes of NSSI and 21 adults without histories of NSSI that were matched by sex, IQ, and age. Executive functioning measures included: the Trail Making Test, D-KEFS Trail Making Test, Color Trails Test, Controlled Oral Word Association Test, and the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test. The main neurocognitive finding was that women in both groups were more impaired than men in either group on a measure of divided attention and cognitive flexibility. No other significant group differences were found on measures of executive functioning. However, there were findings that trended towards significant, which was limited by sample size. Qualitative data revealed distinct differences between groups in which individuals with histories of NSSI had higher rates of co-morbid substance abuse, trauma, Axis II diagnoses, and suicidality. Results highlighted numerous directions for future research. Specifically, comprehending neuropsychological functioning and other qualitative data for individuals who self-injure will enable researchers and clinicians to better understand the mechanisms that underlie self-injurious behaviors. Further, it will help to develop more appropriate

interventions for these behaviors by taking into account an individual's cognitive strengths and weaknesses, in addition to other co-morbid factors.

Leslie Scheel
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Increasing Understanding of Postpartum Psychosis: An Introductory Manual for Obstetrician-Gynecologists and Pediatricians

The purpose of this doctoral project was to design an introductory informational manual for Obstetrician-Gynecologists (OB-GYNs) and Pediatricians (PEDs) to increase their understanding and raise awareness of postpartum psychosis (PPP). Despite its low prevalence rate, PPP can have negative long-term consequences to a much larger population including a mother's infant, other children, her partner, and additional family members, if not detected and treated immediately. A review of the extant research on these medical providers' awareness of postpartum disorders, especially PPP, revealed a significant lack of knowledge, experience, and comfort addressing the mental health concerns of postpartum women. Obstetrician-Gynecologists and Pediatricians are optimally positioned to be the first line of intervention for this illness: to educate families on risk factors prior to pregnancy, monitor women throughout pregnancy and after delivery, assess how women are adjusting to the significant life changes that motherhood brings, and intervene when women become symptomatic.

A draft manual which included an overview of postpartum mental health disorders, the signs and symptoms, and risk and protective factors, associated with PPP, screening efforts, recommendations for working with families, and local (Massachusetts), national, and online resources, was created based on the existing literature available on PPP. This manual was provided to a sample of five Obstetrician-Gynecologists and Pediatricians who reviewed and evaluated the manual, and delivered their feedback in semi-structured interviews. This feedback was then used to revise the manual.

Medical providers found the overview of postpartum disorders, risk factors, and the resource sections most helpful. Consistent with literature, they reported little to no existing knowledge of PPP and insufficient training. The manual educated providers and increased their awareness of PPP, which reportedly resulted in more informed discussions with women. Although time is a significant barrier, providers were generally open to, and grateful for, receiving comprehensive information on postpartum mental health disorders, access to screening tools, and resources in an accessible manual. Increased education and training for these providers on basic awareness of postpartum disorders and effective and efficient screening tools is necessary to prevent the unnecessary suffering of women and their families.

Anne Schwabenbauer
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Relationship Between the Performance of Older Adults on the Inhibition/Switching Condition of the D-KEFS Color-Word Interference Subtest and a Caregiver Report of Instrumental Activities of Daily Living

In order to improve accurate assessment of instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) in older adults and better understand the relationship between executive functioning and IADLs, this study investigated whether a relationship exists between measures of verbal inhibition and cognitive flexibility and a caregiver report measure of IADLs. Using deidentified retrospective data from an outpatient neuropsychological practice, this study examined the relationship between the Lawton Activities of Daily Living Scale and Delis Kaplan Executive Functioning Scale (DKEFS) Color Word Interference subtest in ninety-four community dwelling older adults aged 60-89 (mean= 72.66 standard deviation= 7.58). The association between the Lawton Activities of Daily Living Scale and DKEFS Color-Word Interference subtest was assessed using a linear regression analysis. Results of the analysis revealed that performance on the

Inhibition and Inhibition/Switching Total Errors conditions of the DKEFS Color-Word Interference subtest were associated with older adults' scores on an IADL scale. The Inhibition condition accounted for an additional 4% of the variance (F=18.977) and the Inhibition/Switching Total Errors condition accounted for an additional 3.9% of the variance (F=12.027) above demographic variables and baseline cognitive conditions. Performance on the Inhibition/Switching condition was not significantly associated with IADLs. These results suggest that a decline in older adults' capacity to complete activities of daily living is associated with poor verbal inhibition and difficulties with self-monitoring and impulsivity.

Rebecca Stacy
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

A Study of The Unique Stressors and Burnout Among Subspecialties in Clinical Psychology

This study used a survey method with the following measures to identify general and unique stress factors leading to burnout in subspecialties in psychology: Maslach Burnout Inventory- Human Services Survey, 3rd edition (MBI-HS), Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21), Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS), and The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ). Participants were also asked to identify their work setting, hours worked, subspecialty, type of employment, unique stressors, and coping skills. T-tests and post-hoc analyses were used to analyze results. A total of 206 psychologists were analyzed in the current study (106 clinical/counseling psychologists, 40 forensic psychologists, and 60 neuropsychologists). Results identified general and unique stressors of subspecialties within clinical psychology. Analysis found psychologists face various challenges depending on workplace and subspecialty. For example, clinical/counseling psychologists reported poor benefits as a unique stressor more often than forensic psychologists; forensic psychologists reported working with difficult clients and security issues were unique stressors more so than for clinical/counseling psychologists; and neuropsychologists reported having large caseloads and high no-show rates were unique stressors more so than for forensic or clinical/counseling psychologists. Recommendations for future research include larger sample size, use of narrative, and clarification for psychologists working in more than one setting. These additions will contribute to the existing body of literature as well as provide more specific information to research on burnout.

Elizabeth Stilwell
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Social Media: A Dynamic Risk Factor For Adolescent Male Aggression

The purpose of this doctoral project is to better understand the complicated dynamics that appear to exist between adolescent social media use and offline interpersonal relationships, particularly as it relates to online provocation and real world aggressive behavior. This is an exploratory study aimed at obtaining first-hand accounts of how adolescent males account for physical aggression in response to online experiences, the contributing emotional factors, and the influence of the online audience. This study employed a qualitative design using both a survey and vignettes to collect data. Data was collected from 15 adolescent males who ranged in age from 14 to 16. Data was analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach. Themes that emerged from the data included, among others, the magnification of conflict occurring on social media and the loss of control over impression management. This project was intended to be a starting point of exploration and to contribute to the future development of violence intervention programs.

Erika Updegrove
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

The Role of Cognitive Rehabilitation in Alcoholics and Addicts Practicing Abstinence: A Manual for Clinicians

Many alcoholics and addicts maintain some form of dysexecutive functioning, attention and memory impairments after they abstain from substances. Cognitive rehabilitation has proven effective for individuals who suffer similar complaints after head injury or from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The purpose of this project was to develop a cognitive rehabilitation manual appropriate for use with alcoholics and addicts practicing abstinence in an effort to increase treatment compliance and functional performance outcomes. The domains of executive functioning and memory were found to be the most prevalent deficits for substance users and therefore became the targeted cognitive substrates for the manual. A draft of the Cognitive Rehabilitation for Alcoholics and Addicts (CR-AA) manual was created and then sent to five expert reviewers. Feedback from the reviewers was incorporated into the final draft of the manual. This combined effort resulted in the development of a cognitive rehabilitation manual to treat executive functioning and memory impairments, that was accessible to therapists treating alcoholics and addicts practicing abstinence.

John Young
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

A Comparison Between the Effects of the One-hour and Twelve-hour Massachusetts Municipal Basic Recruit Officer Course Mental Health Training on Officer's De-Escalation Skills, Self-Efficacy, and Stigmatizing Attitudes

Police officers are often the first responders to persons in crisis with mental illness. In 2009, Massachusetts was ranked last in the United States regarding funding for training new police officers. The mental health curriculum in the police academy was outdated and only one-hour in length. In response to this, Massachusetts recently developed an updated, twelve-hour mental health curriculum. The current research measured the effects of the twelve-hour mental health curriculum for new recruits on officer's de-escalation abilities, self-efficacy, and stigmatizing attitudes. The research intended to compare the effects of the one-hour and twelve-hour curricula, as well as compare the effects of the twelve-hour curriculum to existing police training models such as Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings. Two hundred and thirty new officers completed pre- and post- training questionnaires that measured the research variables. The results suggested the twelve-hour training produced greater effects on self-efficacy than the one-hour training. In addition, the twelve-hour training produced similar effects as existing police training models. This suggests the updated, twelve-hour curriculum increases officers confidence in responding to persons with mental illness and helps effectively prepare officers to respond to persons in crises. Providing updated, thorough mental health training to police officers will help them obtain the skills and confidence required to minimize officer, person served, and bystander injuries while working toward the best possible outcome for all involved.

Mirella Young
Clinical Psychology
August 2015

Rethinking "Having It All": Contemporary Feminist Perspectives

Though women have grown up with the message that it is possible to "have it all," their experiences of balancing motherhood and professional careers in relation to this concept have not been sufficiently explored. This project seeks to examine how dual-earner couples are balancing the competing demands of work and home, how motherhood affects women's career trajectories and identity development, and the challenges and stressors faced by working parents. The study also explores opinions regarding feminism, gender equality, and "having it all" as a cultural concept. An online survey was administered to participants (N = 531) using a mixed method design that included multiple choice and open-ended questions. Participants' and partners'

work environments, opinions about American work culture, experiences related to motherhood, child and family responsibilities, feminist identity, and "having it all" were assessed. Participants were English-speaking, partnered women over the age of 18, with children under 12 years old, who had worked in the United States for some time both prior to and after having children. Data was analyzed for common themes using a phenomenological approach. The findings show that motherhood is a highly transformative life stage for working mothers striving to reconcile their previous and current identities. Though participants were likely to prioritize motherhood in their children's early years, most also demonstrated enduring commitment to their careers. Nevertheless, combining work and family was significantly challenging due to cited gender inequities and social and structural challenges that contributed to emotional stress. Most participants identified as feminists, but their definitions of feminism were varied and personal. Though women wanted fulfilling careers and family lives, many identified balance, flexibility, and individually defined happiness as important components of "having it all." Others critiqued the concept outright as a damaging myth that sets women up for failure. Data obtained in this study highlights the unique challenges faced by working mothers and dual earner couples and the need to enhance social and structural supports for working families.

Lisa Andrade
School Psychology
August 2015

Increasing School Parental Involvement in Puerto Rican Families

The purpose of the present study was to examine various efforts that were implemented in an inner-city Pre-K-8 school to increase parental involvement, specifically Puerto Rican parental involvement. Additionally, ways to further increase Puerto Rican parental involvement in schools were explored in the current study. Eight Puerto Rican participants participated in the study. The participants completed a survey and participated in one of two focus groups that were held. The survey inquired about parents' opinions of the initiatives the school put into place to increase parental involvement. The focus groups focused on parent's perceptions on the impact of their involvement on their child's education, the quality of the events/activities that were held at the school, and brainstorming ways to further increase parental involvement with Puerto Rican parents. Results revealed that the participants felt happy that the school made them and their children feel that they were part of a family. They appreciated having school staff that spoke Spanish and that communication tools that were sent home were in Spanish. The participants also shared that they were pleased that the school valued and celebrated various cultures. They also noted areas that needed improvement. The participants shared that more school staff that speak other languages besides English are needed at school events. Also, flexibility in scheduling school events and assistance with transportation are areas that the school should improve. Finally, some participants shared that they would like to be invited to help plan family involvement activities at school.

Catherine McKelvey
School Psychology
August 2015

Interagency Collaboration for Children Identified with Emotional Disturbance

Children identified with severe emotional disturbance (SED) benefit from integrated service delivery. Interagency collaboration, specifically between school and community mental health providers, has the potential to improve child outcomes; however, the discrepancies between system functioning impact collaborative efforts. This study aimed to identify factors that influence interagency collaboration. Participants consisted of certified school psychologists (n=30) and masters level community mental health providers (n=22) who service students identified with SED in Massachusetts. Participants completed a modified version of the Expanded School Mental Health Collaboration Instrument (ESMHCI) and five participants from each group completed voluntary follow-up interviews. The ESMHCI measured participants' perceptions

regarding types of collaboration, influences on collaboration, and benefits of collaboration. Each of the three primary scales includes subscales that were evaluated to gather additional information. Significant differences were found between groups on both the influences (p=.001) and benefits of collaboration (p=.001) scales, with community mental health providers reporting more positive perceptions on both scales. The results identified significantly different perceptions regarding current collaborative practice between school and community mental health professionals that can be utilized to inform and improve future collaborative efforts. Findings suggest that systemic differences and structures impact interagency collaboration. Future research is needed to provide a more in-depth assessment of perceptions regarding collaboration between homogenous groups of clinical professionals.

Wendy Price
School Psychology
August 2015

Measuring the Effectiveness of a Professional Development Workshop on Attitudes and Knowledge in Working with Self-Injurious Youth

The purpose of the current study was to assess the impact of a half-day professional development workshop on school mental health professionals' level of knowledge and comfort in working with students who self-injure. Participants were middle and high school mental health workers within a Massachusetts public school collaborative catchment area. Pre-tests, post-tests and a follow-up survey (occurring three weeks after the workshop) were employed to measure changes in participants' attitudes (according to the Final Attitudes Scale) and knowledge (of workshop related content) in working with youths who self-injure. Open-ended questions regarding the impact of the workshop on practice were collected and qualitatively analyzed. Measures were completed by participants in person at the workshop and on-line at the follow-up. Data was gathered at pre-test, post-test, and at the three week follow-up and later analyzed according to each of these three independent variables. The results of this study indicate that there was a significant increase in participants' content related knowledge of SIB following participation in the workshop (pre-test to post-test mean of 24.7 point gain, n=32). In addition, participants significantly increased their level of knowledge and comfort in working with this population, and a significant increase was also found in the participants' level of empathy and efficacy. A significant decrease in negative attitudes towards self-injurers was also found. These gains were maintained at three week follow-up, however, the results were not statistically significant and the results were less meaningful due to the poor response rate (n=13). Overall, participants indicated the workshop was beneficial to them, particularly the HIRE Model of assessment.

Lisa van Luling (Lebouf)
School Psychology
August 2015

Externalizing and Internalizing Problems: Does one Trump the Other? A Comparison of Teacher Referral Methods for Determining Student Risk of Social, Emotional & Behavioral Health Needs

This paper compares two widely utilized referral methods for determining student behavioral health needs— teacher nomination and a commercial universal screener the BIMAS (Meier, McDougal & Bardos, 2011). Teachers (N=8) in one urban elementary school rated students in grades two though five (N=125) using both referral methods. It was predicted that BIMAS results would change over time suggesting student improvement, that the two methods would yield different results, and that the BIMAS would be more sensitive to internalizing disorders with disproportionally more externalizing disorders likely to be referred through teacher nomination. BIMAS results for the whole sample did not significantly change over time with the exception of improvement in the area of cognitive/attention. BIMAS results for the at-risk nominated sample did not significantly change over the course of a school year but worsened for all constructs except social skills. At-risk scores on the BIMAS in both the fall and spring

were consistent with teacher nominations in the spring suggesting strong predictive and concurrent validity. Without conducting significance testing, the BIMAS was more sensitive to internalizing disorders than teacher nomination, weakness in academic skills was the greatest predictor of nomination and the majority of nominated students experience multiple presenting problems with similar severity. A system for combining both referral methods is recommended and discussed further along with additional implications and study limitations.

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The effects of an exercise program on motivation to change and treatment engagement in Therapeutic Day School students

The purpose of the current study was to assess the impact of a structured exercise program on student motivation to change and engagement in therapy sessions. Student participants (who were between the ages of 10 and 16) all attended a Therapeutic Day School. They participated in a structured exercise program, which consisted of an exer-gaming stationary bike curriculum during physical education class. Students participated for a minimum of ten minutes twice a week. Two additional measures were used in this study to determine client motivation to change and engagement in therapy. Data was gathered through the Thinking about Working on Challenges Contemplation Ladder completed by participants as well as The Clinician Rating of Therapeutic Engagement completed by clinicians. Measures were completed by students and clinicians during weekly individual therapy sessions. Pre-intervention and post-intervention ratings were obtained for each of the student participants. Data was analyzed for each of the variables: student self-reports of motivation to change, clinician ratings of therapeutic engagement, and the level of agreement between these two variables. The results of this study indicate that there is not a significant increase in client self-reports of motivation to change ($p=.43$) following participation in the exercise program. Descriptive statistics reveal an overall increase in clinician ratings of therapeutic engagement, although this finding was also not significant ($p=.14$). However, there was a significant increase ($p=.04$) in the level of agreement between client ratings of motivation to change and clinician ratings of therapeutic engagement, indicating that client self-reports may be more in line with clinician ratings after participation in the exercise program.