

Meredith Anne Balis

Exploring the Application of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy with At-Risk Youth

Adolescents struggling with depression, anxiety, and a low sense of self may not find traditional modes of psychotherapy as an appropriate fit. This qualitative study explores how equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) provides a secure space for adolescents to explore their emotions. Three female therapists providing EAP were interviewed about working with adolescents. Several themes emerged including the importance of the experiential process with the horses, the use of non-verbal communication, the application of metaphors, and the increase of self-esteem that emerges during the EAP process. With the assistance of horses, therapists can help at-risk teens understand and process the internal and external factors that contribute to their struggles. The participation of the horse in a therapy session can strengthen the dyad within the triad which can increase the therapeutic bond between the client and the therapist. Horses unconsciously use therapeutic techniques such as modeling, reacting, and helping the client set and reach realistic goals. This may also help therapists in providing mental health treatment in an emotionally safe and collaborative setting. Despite an increasing number of studies, there is still a need for more knowledge about the unique features of equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) with at-risk youth.

Dina Bdaiwi

Disordered Eating of All Shapes and Sizes: Treating Women and Girls of Color

The study goal was to garner a deeper understanding of the development and treatment of disordered eating among women and girls of ethnically marginalized communities. The qualitative research study relied on the data from three mental health clinician participants of various ethnic backgrounds. The three participants identified as women, one White and Jewish American, another Black, white, and Indigenous American, and the last Mexican American. Transcripts were produced through Zoom and later edited for quality assurance. Coding was done in partnership with a graduate colleague to identify themes regarding clinician biases, culture, theory, and development of disordered eating. Each participant noted the relevance of being culturally sensitive and humble as well as the impact of trauma to the development of disordered eating. Each participant offered differing views on treatment modality including cognitive behavioral therapy, internal family systems, EMDR, and more. The implications of the study include the promotion of cultural awareness among mental health clinicians and addressing mental health stigma in communities of color.

Maria Cabrera

We Are Not the Same: Addressing Ways Counselors Provide Cultural and Trauma Informed Treatment to Latinx Communities

It is projected that by the year 2050, the Latinx population will comprise more than 50% of the US population. The Latinx community is also one of the minority groups most susceptible to psychological effects due to trauma. As such, it is essential to address ways counselors will need to adapt to meet the needs of this growing population. The present study explores three mental health clinicians' experiences providing cultural and trauma informed treatment to Latinx communities. A qualitative semi-structured interview study was conducted to gain an understanding of their perspectives on ways in which trauma may affect Latinx communities, as well as provide insight about the role of culturally informed treatment methods. Four primary themes emerged from the data: trauma among Latinx families; experienced marginalization of

Latinx folks; effects of colonization on Latinx families and mental health professionals; and promoting healing among Latinx communities and mental health workers. Findings suggest that there are varying facets of trauma prominent within Latinx communities. Incorporating the client's culture into treatment could reduce cultural identity confusion, PTSD symptoms experienced before and during migration, and most importantly, it may pave the way in creating more culturally informed mental health treatment programs for clinicians.

Aja Chavez

Exploring Therapist Experiences Working with Women with Substance Use Disorder in Residential Settings

This study explores the use of residential treatment for women with substance use disorder while addressing how women's gender identity affects treatment and trauma in connection with the treatment process. Three participants were interviewed, including one licensed clinical social worker and two licensed marriage and family therapists, using a semi-structured interview approach. An emergent theme code set was established through data analysis utilizing qualitative procedures. Five subordinate themes emerged from the interviews, including how gender identity affects substance use and treatment, underlying core issues affecting women with substance use disorder, therapeutic methods used in residential treatment centers for women, clinical care and experience and barriers for women seeking treatment for substance use disorder.

Kevin Conlon

Where The Wild Things Are: Examining the Clinical Use of Nature-Based Therapy to Heal the Relationship Between Men, Masculinity, and Depression

Masculine role norms impact the relationship men have with help-seeking behaviors, coping strategies, and adequate treatment outcomes for depression. As a result, men are diagnosed with depression at disproportionately low rates, while simultaneously evidencing disproportionately high rates of extreme psychosocial suffering outside of clinical settings. This research investigates the experience of five male clinicians using nature-based therapy to facilitate healing relationships between men, masculinity, and depression. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed and resulted in four prominent themes which highlight: the unique experience of depression in males, healing aspects of nature-based therapy with men, the importance of therapeutic relationships for men, and present limitations to nature-based therapies. Despite limitations, this study implies a need to improve clinical conceptualization of male experiences with depression, continued development of non-traditional clinical interventions for males, and the critical importance of uplifting male experiences as a tenet of multicultural counseling.

Yessica Curiel

EFT Therapists' Experiences Working Through Infidelity with Heterosexual Latinx Couples

The aim of the present research was to explore the experiences of emotionally focused couples therapists who work with Latinx couples on the clinical issue of infidelity. The data was sought in an effort to shed light on the challenges and strengths of therapists and clients while working through this type of attachment rupture. The researcher utilized *interpretive phenomenological analysis* (IPA), which is a qualitative approach focused on the perspective of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2013). Participants included four therapists with extensive experience working with couples and infidelity. A semi-structured interview was conducted, and participants provided information about their own clinical experiences working with this population. Six super-ordinate themes emerged from the data analysis: therapist

conceptualization of infidelity process and response, orienting Latinx couples to therapy, importance of language for treating Latinx couples, creating safety, strengths of couples, and therapists' experience. Some of these findings are consistent with the literature reviewed for the research, while others were not found in the selected research articles reviewed. This provides insights to some of the current needs and areas for further research regarding couples therapy for Latinx couples.

Kathryn Dietz

Working with Conspiracy Theorists: Exploring Therapists' Perspectives and Recommendations

The purpose of the current study is to understand how mental health professionals can approach and assist conspiracy theorists and/or their families who are struggling and seek help. An interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2013) approach was used to structure and analyze the data. The three participants of this qualitative study are licensed therapists that work with either conspiracy theorists or their family members. A semi-structured interview with 10 questions was used to gather data. The results included the super-ordinate themes: conceptualizing the population, mental health, therapeutic theories. Within those subordinate themes, subthemes were derived, and included: boundaries, values, influences, what therapists should avoid, and possible therapeutic interventions. The results demonstrate the importance of understanding this population and how therapists can assist them. The implications of this study shed light on therapeutic boundaries and cultural sensitivity when working with people with different beliefs of any kind. Future research could focus on when beliefs radicalize or influence a person to become violent in the name of those beliefs.

Nicole Hadley

Exploring Counselors' Approaches and Their Encountered Barriers with Trauma-informed Services

Most individuals will experience some type of traumatic experience in their lifetime. A high percentage of these adversities will occur in childhood. However, individuals who have experienced traumatic events may not be aware of how those traumas impact their behaviors, coping skills, as well as the physical and mental well-being. The current study explores how therapists implement trauma-informed practices to mediate both immediate and long-term impacts of childhood adversities and traumatic life events. Participants in this qualitative study include a male therapist and two female therapists who implement trauma-informed services. Data was collected through three individually recorded interviews conducted through Zoom. Several themes emerged including the importance in building a therapeutic relationship, biopsychosocial factors, and how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and intergenerational trauma. Although there were barriers found that impact effective, the use of trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy (TF-CBT), mindfulness, and play therapy could be a beneficial option for therapists working with trauma.

Lisa Jorgensen

Intersections of Trauma: Examining How Therapists Use Trauma-Informed and Mindfulness-Based Treatment with Sexual- and Gender-Minority Clients with Comorbid Diagnoses

Sexual- and gender-minority clients with comorbid bipolar disorders and substance use disorders are individuals who fall into multiple unique and stigmatized populations and who therefore face a distinct vulnerability to trauma. While there have been previous studies focused on how to

therapeutically treat each of these populations separately, there seems to be very little research on how to treat these individuals as a whole. The present qualitative study examines the use of mindfulness-based and trauma-informed therapy with this specific clientele in an effort to help expand upon the literature that explores possible treatment options. Semi-structured interviews with three LGBTQ-affirming therapists were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2013). Three superordinate themes emerged, including: (1) important therapist attributes when working with this population; (2) common struggles within this population; and (3) benefits and limitations of using mindfulness-based and trauma-informed modalities. The current findings support some of the foci of the existing literature, including the need for a non-judgmental and affirming therapeutic environment, while highlighting areas for possible future research.

Rachel Kwon

Examining the Use of a Family-based Approach to Treat Asian Americans with Schizophrenia

The present study examines the use of a family-based approach to treat Asian Americans with Schizophrenia. Following a review of the existing literature, semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data from three mental health professionals who worked with Asian American clients with schizophrenia and their families. Eight super-ordinate themes emerged from the data: Asian community mental health clinics, psychoeducation, continual symptom assessment, collectivism and family support, shame-based culture, danger, medication compliance, and caregiver burnout. Findings suggest that providing culturally competent services through Asian American mental health professionals who can speak the client's language is beneficial. Other clinical implications include the relevance of community-based services, such as Full Service Partnership programs. These programs have a team of therapists, peer partners, case managers, psychiatrists, and other professionals to provide multi-faceted support to the client and their family. Areas of future research include the differences of treatment for those with Medi-Cal versus private health insurance and the discernment of whether calling the police during times of crisis is harmful or beneficial.

Steve La

Honoring the Caregiver: Exploring the Strengths, Challenges, and Culturally Affirming Practices for Asian American Caregivers Living Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Asian American caregivers possess a wide range of unique cultural values, such as filial piety, depending on their immigration histories to the United States. Although there are a multitude of studies already focused on caregivers, there is less research examining the intersection of cultural values of Asian American caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This present study explores the cultural identities of Asian American caregivers living through a worldwide health crisis. Four mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their expertise with this population and their insights related to the specific challenges, strengths, and culturally adaptive interventions that may assist Asian American caregivers. These interviews revealed the following themes: personal experiences, sense of duty, mental health challenges, isolation, lack of specialized support, role of acculturation, spirituality, and family support. The findings from the interviews align with literature suggesting that Asian American caregivers gravitate toward protective factors and interventions focused on spirituality, social connectedness, and family support. Furthermore, these interventions may be culturally compatible with Asian American caregivers living under an increased risk of harm posed by a life-threatening virus.

Andria Maynard

Examining Therapists' Experiences Working with Justice-Involved Youth of Color

A large number of youths come into contact with the justice system, many of whom are youth of color. Youth involved in the justice system have experiences that contribute to mental health concerns. Any pre-existing mental health issues they have can be exacerbated due to contact with the criminal justice system, which impacts their reentry into society. More research is needed that focuses on the mental health treatment of these youth during and post-incarceration. The present study explores how mental health professionals address the mental health concerns that justice-involved youth of color experience and how they assist overall success, including when reentering their community. Four mental health professionals with experience working with justice-involved youth were interviewed. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) was used to analyze the data, where four main themes emerged: (1) Cultural and Systemic Issues (2) Therapeutic Treatment (3) Self-Concept (4) Building on Strengths. Results emphasized the use of various modalities and the therapeutic relationship to work with youth in treating mental health concerns and the value of self-concept work. The findings suggest the importance of support for youth reentering the community and the need for treatment to consider culture, trauma, and development.

Kame Mays

From Yellow Peril to Coughing While Asian: Asian American Counselors' Work with Asian American Clients during the COVID-19 Era

Since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020, acts of verbal harassment and violence towards Asian Americans (AA) have risen across the United States. Although preliminary research has been conducted to find the psychological effects of this surge in racism in AA, little research has been conducted regarding AA counselor's experiences working with AA clients during this time. The author interviewed 3 AA mental health practitioners working with AA clients who have experienced COVID-19-related racial trauma. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, data from the interviews were analyzed into three superordinate themes: societal context, culturally and trauma-informed therapy process, and therapists' work on themselves. Fourteen subordinate themes were also found, such as historical racial trauma, silence, acknowledging one's trauma as trauma, client identity exploration, Asian American representation in the therapy room, and healing. The project concludes with a discussion of how the superordinate themes relate to existing literature, clinical applications, future research, and what the author gleaned from the research experience.

Melissa Jacqueline Ravelo

Las Cosas Que Llevaban: Exploring Counselors' Experiences Supporting Refugee Families During Detention and Post-Reunification

As refugee children seek sanctuary in the U.S., they often arrive having survived adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and trauma. When the children are separated from their families and detained, their psychosocial health deteriorates. While critical, reunification does not neutralize the damage of separation. In this qualitative study, three counselors were interviewed about their experiences supporting children in detention and reunited families. Data was thematically analyzed by a team of two partners. Analysis revealed seven themes: support in detention, treatment barriers, *los caminos de la vida*, *el impacto cultural*, manifestation of symptoms, healing, and the therapist's process. The findings reinforce that life after detention

can be challenging for youth and how difficult reunification can be for families. Results also suggest that relational connections in therapy can help rebuild trust with this population. Findings from this study could have implications for how clinicians support reunified families in treatment and how policies might protect refugee children.

Celeste Sanchez

Working Towards Acceptance: How Therapists Help Latinx LGBTQ+ Clients and Their Families

The present study explores themes surrounding the experiences, concerns, and needs of Latinx LGBTQ+ clients and their families. Given the amount of adversity this population faces it is critical to gain insight into their experiences, narratives, and struggles to better facilitate therapeutic services. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three participants who have experience working with Latinx LGBTQ+ clients and their families. Participants provided detailed descriptions of their personal and professional experiences navigating presenting concerns that arise for this population. Interpretive Phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to explore and analyze the data. Several themes arose from these detailed descriptions, which included: identity development, the coming out process, the rejecting experience, counselors' process, and therapeutic needs in the community. Some of the results of this study support existing literature on the topics of the rejecting experience and the counselors' process in helping this population. The findings of this study reinforce the importance of conducting future research on Latinx LGBTQ+ populations, therapeutic approaches, and intersecting identities.

I-Ling Chu Silberstein

Eating Disorders and Weight Stigma During COVID-19: Exploring a Multicultural Weight Neutral Approach for Marginalized Populations

Fear, anxiety, and uncertainty escalated when COVID-19 prompted worldwide quarantines. Eating disorder (ED) behaviors also increased across the general population and among individuals with EDs while COVID-19 deaths exposed systematic racial and social class inequities. This qualitative study explores pandemic effects on marginalized populations with EDs through a multicultural weight neutral lens. Experiences were gathered from five mental health clinicians in the ED field who worked with various racial minorities, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and immigrant backgrounds during the pandemic. Results emphasized how quarantine restrictions, social media messages, and cultural backgrounds affected ED pathology. Findings also suggested that marginalized populations experienced heightened uncertainty, weight stigma, and trauma. Participants faced therapeutic challenges and ethical dilemmas, which provided insight into telehealth and co-experiencing pandemic trauma. Clinical implications include focusing on therapist-client relationships, trauma-informed training, advocacy for equitable and affordable health care, and establishing professional support for mental health providers during traumatic events.

Tracey Stafford

Exploring Professionals' Experiences with Cultivating Resilience among the QTBIPOC Communities

Occupying intersecting marginalized identities, Queer Trans* Black Indigenous People of Color (QTBIPOC) are confronted with compounding stress, increasing their chances for psychological distress. However, limited information is available that centers the mental health needs for

TGNC Black Indigenous community members. More information is needed to understand how clinicians may amplify resiliency strategies and strengths among QTBIPOC peoples. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore clinicians' experiences with fostering resilience among the QTBIPOC population. Participants included three qualified queer BIPOC license mental health clinicians; two identified as two spirit nonbinary. Semi structured interviews conducted were analyzed utilizing interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Results yielded major themes: (a) conceptualizing resilience, (b) strategies and interventions, (c) therapist identity and process, and (d) community care. Results support reviewed literature centering knowledge from Indigenous, two-spirit (2S) experiences with mental health and resiliency. Clinical implications and limitations of the present study are discussed.

Kassandra Elise Vargas

The Experiences of Licensed Mental Health Professionals Utilizing Spirituality and Indigenous Healing Practices with Latinx Clients

Spirituality has been shown to be an important aspect of the identities of Latino/a communities which has historically been overlooked within the field of counseling. More current research has indicated the value of incorporating spirituality within the counseling setting, however, more research is needed highlighting the use of decolonized practices with Latinx populations. This qualitative study examined the experiences of three licensed mental health professions who have incorporated spiritual and Indigenous healing practices with Latinx clients. The participants were subjected to semi-structured interviews in which the researchers conducted a thorough data analysis that revealed several major themes including, holistic healing, honoring Indigenous roots, decolonized healing practices, use of rituals, prayer, and sacred herbs, and assessing spirituality and religiosity. Possible implications of the study indicate the importance of culturally sensitive approaches that assess spirituality and religiosity and incorporate Indigenous healing practices with Latinx clients if appropriate. Additional implications are further discussed.

Nancy Villalvazo

Let's Look at the Bright Side: Exploring the Use of Positive Psychology among Latino/x Individuals to Address Acculturative Stress

The present study explores how counselors apply positive psychology to address acculturative stress among Latino/x individuals. Three mental health professionals were interviewed about their experiences working with Latino/x individuals experiencing acculturation stress and utilizing positive psychology techniques. The interviews were analyzed and seven emerging themes were found that include: (a) barriers, (b) *familismo* (c) gender differences, (d) trauma, (e) reframing, (d) need to prove self and (e) Covid impacts. The results of this present study support and expand the current literature regarding mental health professionals and their work with the Latinx population. The current study's findings suggest that future research could study how the Coronavirus acts as another variable to acculturation stress amongst this population. Future therapists can learn how the usage of Latinx values may serve as a motivating factor to engage clients in treatment.