

597 Abstracts Fall 2022

Andrea Martinez Arreguin

Sana, Sana, Colita de Rana, Si no Sanas Hoy, Sanarás Mañana: Clinical Considerations for Working with Latinx Individuals with Histories of Generational Trauma and the Intersectionality of Complex Family Systems

The present qualitative study explored the intersectionality between intergenerational trauma and complex families within the Latinx community. After reviewing existing literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three female mental health clinicians with expertise in this area. Three themes emerged: the roots of the disease, warriors, and the healing recipe. Findings suggest that low insight and normalization of trauma, fragmented communication, age, and acculturation perpetuate the transmission of trauma. Interventions should target post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, and somatic symptoms. Findings recommend a holistic and culturally sensitive approach that includes cognitive behavioral therapy and strength-based interventions targeting fear, shame, empathy, self-care, positive self-talk, and integration of values. Furthermore, the present study submits that the intersectionality between intergenerational trauma and complex families is conceptualized from a parallel versus systemic perspective. Given the steady increase in the Latinx population and the increased formations of complex family systems, this vulnerable and underrepresented group requires further research.

Samantha Brown

Laughing Through the Pain: Counselors' Experiences with Applied Therapeutic Humor for Chronic Pain

The present study explores counselors' experiences with the use of applied therapeutic humor in treating clients with chronic pain. The researcher interviewed four mental health professionals experienced in integrating therapeutic humor into their practice using a semi-structured interview approach. The researcher utilized thematic analysis to identify themes and subthemes present in the data. Three broad themes emerged: considerations in the therapeutic relationship, treatment implications and outcomes, and variations of applied therapeutic humor. In concurrence with the present literature, the results suggest applied therapeutic humor can significantly affect pain tolerance in addition to fostering the therapeutic relationship.

Nicole Ryan Carroll

Clinical Considerations for Exploring Identity in Individuals with Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is an inherently destabilizing experience that can alter how individuals relate to the world. The present study examined clinicians' experiences with individuals with chronic pain to determine the extent to which chronic pain impacts a person's sense of individual, interpersonal, and societal identities, as well as possible treatment approaches to address such issues of identity. After a review of the existing literature, four mental health clinicians with experience in working with individuals with chronic pain were interviewed. From these interviews, three themes emerged: chronic pain's impact on identity, treatment approaches to address chronic pain and identity, and intersectional considerations of chronic pain and identity. The findings, in conjunction with existing literature, suggest that education surrounding chronic pain, honoring the stigma inherent in chronic pain, and adopting the principles of advocacy are all crucial in treating identity issues in this population.

Winston W. Chang

Compassionately Navigating Chinese American Men's Bicultural Masculinities

Chinese American men experience cultural and gendered pressures from two sides. Bicultural masculinities teach these men to balance their honor and filial piety – a strong and culturally Chinese duty to family – with the imposing expectations of “being a man” in American society: often sacrificing their own mental and physical well-being in the pursuit of these ideals. Dialectically balancing seemingly contradictory traits, these men simultaneously express feelings of competence and inadequacy. Three semi-structured interviews with mental health professionals who work alongside these men unveiled more detail about this complex and uniquely relational experience of masculinity, the cultural conflicts that arise in the performance of that masculinity, and the development of awareness, acceptance, and empowerment in helping these men find strength in their own centers again. Findings suggest that Chinese American men may especially benefit from interventions that facilitate authentic connections with self.

Erika Clever

Counselors' Experience Working with Adolescents Engaged in Substance and Alcohol use as a Result of the COVID-19 Lockdown

Isolation, fear, and uncertainty fueled an uptick in substance and alcohol use among adolescents during and after the COVID-19 lockdown. The literature suggests that familial and social connections acted as the strongest protective factors against substance and alcohol use while loss of connection and increased utilization of social media increased negative thoughts and feelings. This qualitative study examined the ways in which therapists work with adolescents who were engaged in substance or alcohol use as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. Three community mental health therapists were interviewed about their experiences working with adolescents during and after the COVID-19 lockdown. Thematic analysis of the data resulted six themes that included (a) importance of therapeutic relationship, (b) use of substance or alcohol to cope with the COVID-19 lockdown, (c) stress and anxiety caused by COVID-19 lockdown, (d) influence of family environment, (e) common interventions, and (f) risk/protective factors. The results of the present study support and expand the current literature regarding the importance of the therapeutic relationship, healthy coping skills, and familial and social relationships. Clinical implications, limitations of the present study, and areas of future research are also discussed.

Zackery Collie

Living in A Body That No Longer Works: Exploring Post-Traumatic Growth and Resiliency Following Extreme Loss

There are about 12,500 new cases of spinal cord injuries every year in North America. Spinal cord injuries are often a sudden and life-changing event that causes significant life disruptions. A spinal cord injury happens when damage is done to the spinal cord that either temporarily or permanently causes paralysis in the body's function. The present study explored therapists' experiences working with clients with an acquired disability (spinal cord injury) and how positive transformation and resiliency can occur following an extreme loss. Semi-structured interviews with three participants working with clients who have acquired disabilities provided information on their personal and professional experiences working with this population. Three overarching themes were identified: challenges navigating life after a traumatic event, finding a new path forward, and lessons learned from pain. The results of this study were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). The final results supported the existing literature

that although spinal injuries significantly negatively impact an individual's life, post-traumatic growth can occur.

Gian Densing

Big Boys Don't Cry: Exploring Men's Emotional Disclosure in Therapy

Men often struggle with showing vulnerable emotions. Additionally, due to hegemonic masculine socialization, many men are discouraged from accessing the full range of their emotions. The current study explored how therapists provide a safe space for men to access these vulnerable emotions. Participants in this study include three male therapists currently specializing in men and male socialization. Data was collected through three separate interviews conducted through Zoom and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyze the data. A number of themes emerged including the difficulty of accessing core emotions, hegemonic masculinity, increasing emotional range, reducing shame, and masculine traits of therapists. Building safety and self-compassion with men in the therapy room could be a beneficial option for therapists working with men. Participants indicated that using traditional therapeutic techniques are effective but emphasized the importance of being direct with male clients. Results indicated that managing expectations and utilizing traditional male traits as tools in therapy could increase the ability of men to access their difficult emotions.

Sophia Fitts

Always a Golden Girl: Exploring Therapeutic Interventions Post-Covid for Older Adults

The arrival of COVID-19 in the United States led to worsening loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline in some older adults. The present study explores various treatment interventions addressing commonly encountered issues by older adults post-COVID. Following a review of the existing literature, three mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experiences working with this population. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the interview data. Six super-ordinate themes emerged from the data: (a) the new normal: COVID-induced stressors, (b) post-COVID therapeutic modalities, (c) therapeutic interventions for older adults, (d) harnessing external factors, (e) coping with cognitive decline, and (f) confronting ageism in practice. The results of the present study support and expand the current literature regarding the experience of older adults during COVID and the experience of mental health professionals in their work with older adults post-COVID. The study provided new information on therapeutic interventions utilized for older adults with various cognitive impairment levels and those living in institutionalized care settings.

Hannah Gibson

I Don't Need to be Fixed: Exploring Therapist's use of Gender Affirming Therapy with Transgender Youth

The present qualitative study explores the use of gender affirmation in a therapeutic setting with transgender and gender-nonconforming clients. The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians, two who identified as non-binary and one as genderqueer, who were currently working with trans clients. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology was used to analyze the collected data. Three super-ordinate themes emerged from the interviews: the anti-gender affirmation movement, the therapist as an agent of healing, and the mental health field in relation to the queer community. Results from the present study suggest that gender affirmation plays an important role in building rapport and increasing

likelihood for clients attending future sessions. Participants highlighted how the recent anti-gender affirmation movement and anti-trans rhetoric have negatively impacted clients' mental health. It is hoped that this study will inform counselors and educators the importance of receiving adequate training regarding working with non-cisgender clients so that the community can be better served.

Alli Gilden

Counseling Considerations for Women Experiencing the Impacts of Societal Weight Bias

The present study explores the impacts of societal weight bias on women, their interpersonal relationships, and mental health treatment. After completing a review of the literature, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with three mental health practitioners engaged in clinical advocacy to disrupt this societal impact. Thematic analysis of these interviews revealed three themes: the breadth of client experiences, the need for an ecological view of treatment, and the importance of practitioner positionality. The results from this study confirm and add to the existing literature, offer clinical implications for mental health practitioners, supervisors, and counselor educators, and suggest future research directions.

Jesayha Hamilton

Exploring Therapist's Experiences Helping Adult Women Navigate Difficult/ Complex Mother Daughter Relationships

The present study explores the experience of three licensed mental health professionals working with adult women who share complex relationships with their mothers. These complex relationships may include but are not limited to abuse and/ or neglect. After reviewing existing literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis took place. Five main themes were found among the data: a) the complex mother-daughter relationship, b) resistance, c) impacts of the complex mother-daughter relationship, d) boundaries and e) therapeutic interventions. It is hoped that this study will bring awareness to and inform mental health professionals, educators, and adult women in these complex relationships of the impacts of such relationships and how to navigate them.

Cee Haupt

Internal Family Systems as a Psychedelic Therapy Framework for Treating Treatment-Resistant Depression

The present study examines how counselors have utilized an internal family systems (IFS) approach in their work as a clinician providing psychedelic therapy, particularly in regard to alleviating symptoms of depression. The existing literature regarding psychedelics and their efficacy for depression and which traditional counseling modalities are a suitable fit for the structure of psychedelic therapy is reviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three mental health professionals to understand their experiences working with psychedelics, symptoms of depression, and the IFS therapeutic approach. The data was analyzed by two researchers, and three themes emerged from the data: (1) psychedelic therapy structure and IFS, (2) 'Self' healing, and (3) therapeutic connection and 'attunement.' Despite the present research not indicating a particular theoretical approach as being the best fit for psychedelic therapy and future clinical trials of the efficacy of psychedelic therapy, the findings support the present knowledge base regarding the overlap of IFS tenants and how current psychedelic therapy sessions are conducted. Clinical considerations, areas of future research, and limitations of the

study are also discussed. Findings from this study may have implications for clinicians choosing to incorporate IFS as a framework counseling approach within the psychedelic therapy process.

Jeanne Be Mai Lien Le

Ghosts Across the Sea: Exploring Counselors' Experiences Promoting Healing of Intergenerational Trauma in Southeast Asian Refugee Families

Southeast Asian refugee families experience the repercussion of intergenerational trauma rooted from their history of war, genocide, and loss. Furthermore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of how mental health clinicians promote healing for Southeast Asian refugee families. After reviewing the contemporary literature, four interviews were conducted with Asian American mental health clinicians who had experience with this population. Four primary themes emerged from the data: (1) disconnection in parent-child relationships, (2) stigmatization of mental health, (3) manifestation of intergenerational trauma, and (4) methods to promote healing. The findings support and expand upon the current literature regarding the transmission of intergenerational trauma, the impacts, and ways to support this community. The research encouraged clinicians to utilize culturally competent counseling, psychoeducation, and incorporating family relationships for supporting SEA families with intergenerational trauma. Clinical implications, limitations of the present study, and areas of future research are also discussed.

Arlene Ayala-Lopez

Mujeres Poderosas: Understanding Burnout and the Experiences of Latinx Women in the Mental Health Field

The present study explores the experiences of five Latinx women in the mental health field. Semi-structured interviews provided personal and professional experiences of Latinx women clinicians. Three themes emerged: identity formation of Latinx women in the mental health field, challenges associated with stress and burnout, and development of self-care. The results of this study suggest that Latinx women exemplify unique experiences as therapists than non-Latinx monolingual therapists. Unique factors include navigating two cultures, which includes bilingualism in Spanish and multiple roles as Latinx women. Participants' self-care development was tied to individualistic practices and staying connected to their Latinx community and culture. These findings suggest that prioritizing self-care, practicing community care, and finding ways to model self-care to others may help manage stress and prevent burnout. The study provided an insightful perspective on Latinx women's experiences in the mental health field.

Kasey Mandelbaum

Affirmative Therapy for Ethically Non-Monogamous Clients Creating and Maintaining Boundaries

The present study explores the way counselors use affirmative therapy techniques to support clients engaged in ethical non-monogamy. The current literature reviewed mainly focused on a deficit-based model of relationships that may leave clients feeling judged and stigmatized because of their relationship orientation. The topic of creating and maintaining boundaries were of interest for counseling researchers due to the nature of establishing rules within relationships. Within this research study, three therapists and members of the LGBTQ+ community were interviewed about their own personal counseling style and their experiences working with ethically non-monogamous clients. Themes around miscommunication, stigma, reasons for

engaging in ethical non-monogamy, and the importance of sharing social locations with clients are explored. The findings affirmed that therapists who are open with clients about their own identities and celebrate their identities and relationship orientations have better rapport within the counseling relationship. Providing an affirming relationship can be a corrective experience for clients who have experienced poor relational experiences in the past.

Brandon Mears

Therapists' Experiences Working with Problematic Porn Use Among Men

The present study used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore how therapists conceptualized male clients experiencing problematic porn use. As porn use continues to rise in the United States, especially among males, more of them may seek professional treatment for problematic uses of porn. Three marriage and family therapists with backgrounds in working with male clients experiencing problematic porn use provided qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Four main themes emerged from the interview data: 1) interpersonal consequences of porn use, 2) intrapersonal developments of porn use, 3) recovery process, and 4) mental health clinician qualities. Results suggested that therapists used personalized interventions in the recovery process of their clients, which included increasing connection with others and themselves, processing trauma, behavior management, and helping clients realign with their values. Mental health professionals are encouraged to acquire specialized training and education for working with problematic porn use, ask about porn use in intake assessments, humanize the issue, collaborate with clients to achieve personalized goals, and include romantic partners in the recovery process if possible.

Leslie Peraza

Understanding Latinx Youth Adversity and Cultural Considerations in Psychotherapy Treatment

Ranging from depression to heart disease, U.S. adults who have experienced at least one childhood adversity are at increased risk of enduring long-term outcomes. While the effects of childhood trauma and treatment approaches have been significantly observed, there is limited literature available on the effects of childhood adversity on Latinx youth or with culturally-sensitive approaches. The present study explored counselors' treatment approaches and cultural considerations while working with trauma-exposed Latinx youth and their families. Through purposeful sampling, three participants with experience working with Latinx youth and families were interviewed for the study. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyze the results, four major themes were identified: parent-child disconnect, combating caregiver reluctance, building the connection, and breaking generational cycles. Approaches such as parent-child interactive therapy, psycho-education, and empowerment were observed as helpful tools for working with Latinx youth and first-generation parents. The emphasis on cultural considerations, such as *personalismo*, the therapist's cultural identity, intergenerational differences, and stigma, was also highlighted through therapeutic integrations.

Guadalupe Abigail Pulido

Decolonizing Mental Health: Exploring Therapists' Integration of Mexican/Latinx/Indigenous Spiritual Practices in the Therapy Room

Research on the integration of Mexican, Latinx, and Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices in psychotherapy is lacking. Research on this integration when working with children is, to the knowledge of this researcher, non-existent. The present study explores the clinical experiences of

clinicians and their integration of spirituality in the therapy room. Three clinicians with experience treating the Mexican/Latinx population and their spiritual beliefs participated in semi-structured interviews, and the data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Six super-ordinate themes emerged from the data: (1) systems of oppression impacting clinicians' spiritual therapeutic work, (2) helping clients reconnect to themselves and the therapeutic relationship through decolonized therapeutic approaches, (3) the importance of therapists' spirituality in providing spiritual approaches to therapy, (4) Latinx clients' clinical concerns, (5) evidence of client healing and growth through spiritual work, and (6) spiritual work with children. All participants advocated for the integration of spirituality in therapy, such as using sage, *copal*, and other techniques rooted in personal indigenous knowledge and wisdom. However, the participants also emphasized the challenge of navigating multiple systems of oppression impacting their ability to do this spiritual therapeutic work with their clients. This study contributes to the extant literature and research by providing personal accounts of how counselors treat Mexican/Latinx clients using a culturally and spiritually adapted therapeutic approach.

Danielle S. Roske

Moving Through the Pain: Exploring Traumatic Motor Vehicle Accidents Through the Lens of Somatic Therapies

Motor vehicle accidents (MVA)s are common events that have the potential to cause significant trauma for individuals. However, the therapeutic treatment for MVAs has long focused on cognitive behavioral therapy and other talk therapies, without taking into account the bodily nature of MVAs. The present study explores three therapists' experiences working with individuals who have trauma from motor vehicle accidents while using somatic therapies. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to examine qualitative data that was gathered through semi structured interviews wherein four superordinate themes emerged: (1) post-accident feelings and symptoms, (2) impact of compounding stressors, (3) helpful interventions within somatic therapies, and (4) post-accident somatic healing. Findings suggest that individuals with trauma from an MVA, especially when dealing with past traumas and other complicating factors, could benefit from somatic therapies. Furthermore, results from this study have the potential to impact therapists' use of somatic interventions for individuals dealing with trauma from an MVA.

Abigail Sanchez

Exploring Culturally Responsive Treatment for Mexican American Adolescents Experiencing Suicidality

The present study explores culturally responsive counseling interventions psychotherapists utilize to facilitate healing among Mexican American adolescents experiencing suicidality. Three licensed psychotherapists of Latine descent were selected via purposeful sampling and interviewed in a 50 - 60 minute semi-structured format. Results were processed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology, and five superordinate themes emerged from the data: Relating to Clients: Positive Bias; Guiding Adolescents; Guiding Caregivers; The Power of Connection; and Beyond Psychotherapy. Results suggest that counselors may increase their effectiveness in treatment by establishing a supportive relationship with clients, including caregivers, and helping clients find ways to re-establish feelings of connection. Findings concluded that to treat suicidality among Mexican American adolescents

effectively, psychotherapists may explore societal factors that negatively impact the client and facilitate healing among the client's family unit. Future research should explore a greater variety of culturally responsive treatment for Mexican American families.

Jennifer Luna Servin

El Arte da Voz: Exploring Therapists' Use of Creative and Expressive Arts with Latinx Trauma Survivors

Many Latinx clients will experience a form of trauma, including sexual assault, and it is important to integrate interventions in treatment that are culturally sensitive. The present study explores the use of creative and expressive arts interventions with Latinx clients who have experienced a form of trauma, including sexual trauma. Following a review of the literature, the researcher recruited three therapists who had experience with integrating creative and expressive arts interventions with Latinx clients who have experienced a form of trauma. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the interview data. Five superordinate themes emerged from the data including therapeutic uses of creative and expressive arts, healing through art, intersectionality and creative arts, the therapist in the room, and challenges when integrating creative and expressive arts. Results suggest that creative arts interventions are culturally aware interventions that may be helpful in the healing of trauma. The results also provide insight into the therapist's experience with integrating creative interventions in therapy.

Alexis Tovar

Exploring Narrative Therapy with Men Experiencing Postrelationship Grief

The experience following a breakup can result in a complicated web of physical and emotional symptoms called postrelationship grief (Morris et al., 2015). The literature suggests that this experience is significantly different among men and women in how they experience and manage symptoms. This qualitative study examined men's experiences of postrelationship grief while exploring the utility and integration of narrative therapy practices. Three narrative therapists were interviewed on their experiences with men and relationship dissolution. The semi-structured interviews were analyzed for common themes relating to existing literature. The themes that emerged included (a) meanings after relationship dissolution, (b) reacting to relationship dissolution, (c) social support, (d) external influence, and (e) narrative therapy for postrelationship grief. Among these themes was the presence of masculinities and their influence on men and experiences of relationship dissolution. Narrative therapy practices are discussed for their utility with men experiencing postrelationship grief and the societal structures that influence it.

Lizeth C. Triana

"Encontrando Nuestras Voces" Therapists' Integration of Culturally Responsive Practices to Facilitate Healing for Undocumented Latinx Women

The present study explored clinicians' use of *testimonios* and other culturally responsive practices to facilitate healing among undocumented Latinx immigrant women. Following a review of the existing literature, three mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experiences working with this population. Three broad themes emerged from the interviews: unique challenges and cultural considerations, therapist characteristics and philosophy, and culturally responsive treatment to working with this population. Findings suggest that immigrant-related experiences can lead to the internalization of negative messages,

resulting in feelings of shame, inferiority, and other negative mental health outcomes. Suggested culturally responsive treatment interventions include value and identity reconstruction, coexisting within community, and testimonio.

Cameron Hillfram Virjee

Natural Healing: The Integration of Ecotherapy in the Treatment of Adolescent Males and Young Men

The increase in mental health concerns reported among transition-age males today corresponds with the increased demand for mental health services among the population. Ecotherapy is one modality used to address the issues facing this demographic. The present qualitative study explored the use and efficacy of ecotherapy in the treatment of transition-age males. A review of the relevant literature was conducted. Semi-structured interviews about the use of ecotherapy in the treatment of adolescent males were conducted with four mental health clinicians. The interviews provided descriptive narratives of clinical and personal experiences. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Four major themes emerged: (a) defining ecotherapy, (b) efficacy of ecotherapy, (c) nature-based interventions, and (d) difficulties implementing ecotherapy. Among these four themes, a total of seven subthemes were identified. Clinical implications, limitations of the present study, and areas of future research are also discussed.