

**Allison Auten***Clinical Perspectives of Integrating Internal Family Systems Among Adolescent Girls with Eating Disorders*

The present study explores the use of internal family systems therapy (IFS) for eating disorders (ED) in adolescent girls. The researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians who currently use IFS or parts work with this population to provide descriptive narratives of their professional experiences resulting in two overarching themes: the complexity of eating disorders, and incorporating IFS in the treatment of adolescent girls with eating disorders. The results of the study support the existing body of literature that discusses complexity of ED, and the bidirectional relationship of eating disorders and interpersonal relationships. These findings also expand upon the limited research on IFS, by discussing how clinicians are using the modality with their clients. The findings affirmed the clinical utility of IFS for working with adolescent girls with eating disorders and how it can increase clients' self-compassion.

**Melanie Barajas Nuño***Latinx Families Moving Beyond the Liminal Space into Comunidad: Somos de Aquí y de Allá*

The current study investigated acculturative stress by exploring the experiences of Latinx youth and families navigating two cultures. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three licensed mental health practitioners with expertise in working with Latinx clients. Qualitative interview data were analyzed, resulting in three overarching themes. The three themes encompassed: (1) the acculturation experiences of bicultural Latinx youth and families, (2) the barriers and challenges encountered by this population, and (3) the alternative modes of healing. The findings underscored the profound impact of systemic oppression on acculturative stressors, contributing to the perpetuation of generational trauma and barriers experienced by Latinx families. Findings shed light on the often overlooked and invisible Latinx/Indigenous identities, revealing the nuanced acculturation experiences often homogenized within the Latinx identity. Lastly, the utilization of community as a healing resource among Latinx youth presents significant clinical implications, emphasizing the potential effectiveness of traditional modes of healing within the Latinx community.

**Diana Blanco***Sanando tus Heridas: Exploring Effective Therapeutic Approaches for Undocumented Latinx Clients with Immigration Trauma*

The present study explores the experiences of clinicians working with undocumented Latinx clients with immigration trauma. Semi-structured interviews were used with four mental health clinicians to collect qualitative data. The main themes that emerged from the interviews included: (1) immigration trauma, (2) mental health concerns, (3) barriers to treatment, and (4) effective and holistic treatment. The results support evidence of the existing literature on the harmful impact of immigration trauma on mental health. Participants offered valuable insights on clinical implications for treating undocumented Latinx clients utilizing culturally adapted therapeutic approaches. Another finding suggested that case management aimed at supporting clients in meeting their basic needs is a critical component that should be integrated with therapeutic treatment.

**Sara S. Brown**

*Journeying into Meaning: Exploring the Use of Narrative Therapy in Psychedelic Integration*

Psychedelics, such as psilocybin and LSD, have gained renewed attention in recent years due to their ability to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness and profound shifts in perception. These experiences often yield deep insights and meaningful realizations that can have lasting therapeutic effects. However, effectively integrating these transformative experiences into individuals' everyday lives is crucial for optimizing outcomes. Narrative therapy, a therapeutic approach centered on meaning-making and the co-construction of narratives, aligns naturally with the meaning-making properties inherent in psychedelics. This study explores the theoretical foundations of narrative therapy, its relevance to psychedelic-assisted therapy, and the potential benefits it may offer in supporting clients in preparing and integrating their psychedelic experiences. Currently, there is a dearth of research that combines a narrative approach with psychedelic work. To learn more about the intersection of these two fields, four narrative therapists were interviewed on their approach working with psychedelic experiences and stories. Three salient themes emerged from the data: Dominant outside forces in psychedelic work; re-storying psychedelic work; and collaborative meaning making. The results suggest that narrative therapy is well-suited to support the integration process in a personally meaningful way, enabling the dismantling of problematic narratives and the creation of new storylines that align with individuals' values and beliefs.

### **Sarah Cabiness**

#### *The Effectiveness of Affirmative Therapy for Destigmatizing Sex Workers*

The current study investigates how therapists support clients engaged in sex work by utilizing affirmative therapy. The current body of study examined how bias affects sex workers' social and professional stigmas. In addition, the literature included the significance of de-stigmatizing efforts as well as techniques for empowering and supporting sex workers during therapy sessions. Four therapists who provide therapy to sex workers were interviewed for this research project to learn more about their personal counseling styles and experiences with this demographic. Social effect, trauma, empathy, trust, person-centered treatment, LGBTQI+, power dynamics, and culture were among the topics covered. The results confirmed that giving clients who have had negative relational experiences in the past an affirming relationship can be a corrective experience. Lastly, the importance of resourcing and social justice proved to be an essential part of improving the quality of care and future research when working with sex workers. Advocating for marginalized populations, specifically sex workers is an essential part of ethical and efficacious treatment for destigmatizing sex workers.

### **Lauren Cully**

#### *Mike Delta Mike Alpha: MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy for Military Personnel with PTSD*

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is prevalent in military personnel. Current treatment options for this diagnosis include trauma-focused psychotherapies and/or pharmacotherapy. Unfortunately, many servicemembers do not respond to treatments that are currently available. A growing body of clinical research suggests the efficacy of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)-assisted psychotherapy in individuals with treatment-resistant PTSD. The present study examines the use of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy (MAP) for the treatment of PTSD in military personnel. The purpose of this study is to explore clinicians' experiences and place them within the context of existing literature about this clinical issue. Semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians produced narratives that provide insight into military-related PTSD and

the efficacy of MAP. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in five key themes: treatment response, treatment barriers, overcoming barriers, unique properties of MDMA, and guilt and blame. Clinical implications, areas of future research, and limitations of the study are also addressed.

### **Leslie Fernandez**

*Investigating the use of Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapies in treating Trauma within communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color*

The current study investigates how therapists and practitioners who utilize psychedelic substances support black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who struggle with trauma symptoms and disorders. The current body of study examined how BIPOC experience psychedelics differently and unique challenges they might face after their post-psychedelic administration. In addition, the literature included the significance of psychedelic decolonization efforts to support practitioners in providing culturally competent and ethically sound care for these populations. Four practitioners who provide psychedelic services to BIPOC were interviewed for this research project to learn more about their personal counseling styles and experiences with this demographic. Systemic oppression, intergenerational trauma, client-centered approaches, cultural competency, and collective healing were among the topics covered. Advocating for a diverse body of psychedelic practitioners and culturally sensitive models of psychedelic therapy are essential parts of ethical and efficacious treatment for people of color.

### **Kristy Nohemy Flores**

*El Sol, La Lluvia, y El Camino: Therapeutic Approaches with Latinx Youth to Process the Journey and Impact of Immigration*

Latinx families' decision to leave their home country and begin a new life in the United States is profoundly personal. Many factors, reasons, and conversations exist before embarking on a migration journey. The migration journey impacts Latinx youth and the entire family system as well. The present study explored culturally responsive approaches when delivering therapeutic services to the Latinx community to create a space for validating and healing the immigration experience. The researcher conducted a literature review to understand what has been written and what is still missing in the research to assist this population further. Three mental health clinicians participated in an interview to provide insight into their experiences working with Latinx immigrant youth and their families. The interview data resulted in three overarching themes: (a) immigration-related trauma, (b) mental health concerns, and (c) culturally adaptive therapeutic approaches. The results of the present study suggest thoroughly assessing for trauma, understanding how immigration impacts mental health, and incorporating practical treatment approaches that assist Latinx youth in healing through their experiences of immigration.

### **Kristen M. Hendry**

*A Family Affair: Exploring Counselors' Experience of Family Involvement in the Development and Treatment of Eating Disorders*

The present study aimed to better understand how families can be an asset or a barrier for adolescents recovering from eating disorders, the intergenerational effects of eating disorders within families, and how deeply ingrained diet culture and fatphobia are within the United States government policies, school systems, medical field, and households. Three therapists who

specialize in treating adolescents and families struggling with eating disorders were interviewed about their experience with this client population. The primary researcher analyzed these interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and found four major super-ordinate themes (1) adolescents learn disordered eating behavior through modeling, (2) families share harmful food and body philosophies, (3) eating disorders are a way to cope, and (4) the importance of the family's role in recovery. Results highlighted how pervasive disordered eating and harmful body talk can be. Also, the importance of caregivers being well enough to support their child in recovery was emphasized. This study is a call to action for mental health clinicians, medical professionals, schools, and parents to receive training and support on how to care for adolescents struggling with eating disorders.

### **Kady Lee**

#### *Exploring the Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy in Treating Problematic Gaming*

Problematic gaming is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged in the past decade. The present study explores the efficacy of cognitive behavioral group therapy (CBT) in treating problematic gaming. Five participants with clinical training and expertise in treating problematic gaming using CBT interventions were selected via purposive and convenience sampling and interviewed in a semi-structured format. Results were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), in which eight major themes were identified, including clinical understanding of problematic gaming, gaming culture, risk factors, underlying mental health concerns and stressors, laying the groundwork with clients, therapy modalities, group therapy, and treatment goals. Findings suggest that CBT is an effective treatment for problematic gaming, yet CBT group therapy requires further research to be validated as efficacious. These findings also expand upon the current research by rejecting the notion that problematic gaming is a behavioral addiction and instead conceptualizing the phenomenon as a maladaptive coping strategy for underlying mental health concerns and life stressors. Clinical implications, areas of future research, and limitations of the present study are addressed.

### **Vanessa Leong**

#### *Fish Out of Water: An Exploration of Clinicians' Experiences Providing Psychotherapy to Asian American Immigrants and Their Families*

Limited research exists on the experiences of clinicians who provide psychotherapy to the Asian American immigrant population. The lack of empirical studies is due to systemic and cultural barriers; nevertheless, Asian American immigrants do receive mental health services. In this qualitative study, three mental health professionals were interviewed to better understand mental health work with Asian American immigrants. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of treatment implications for the Asian American immigrant population. Qualitative analysis identified three major themes about working with this population: Acculturative stress, considerations and challenges in counseling, and treatment implications. The findings from the study generated expected outcomes as well as some unique considerations that clinicians may find helpful when they work with clients from Asian American immigrant population. The implications for clinical practice, recommendations for future research, and limitations of the present study were also discussed.

### **Jenn Louie**

*More Than Their Bodies: Counseling Asian American and Pacific Islander Transgender Individuals with Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility*

There is burgeoning research that highlights Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations and gender and sexual minority identities, yet a gap remains in studies that center the intersectional experiences of the AAPI trans population, specifically in the mental health field. The present study explored various treatment approaches to working with trans AAPI individuals in therapy. After conducting a review of the existing literature, three mental health clinicians were interviewed regarding their experiences working with this population. Three themes emerged from the interviews: common presenting concerns, barriers to treatment, and successful clinical approaches. Cultural competence and cultural humility were found to be integral for effective treatment. The literature and data from the present study suggested that Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and a strong therapeutic relationship may lead to positive therapeutic outcomes for AAPI trans individuals.

**Samantha Love-Fong Schussler**

*4.1 Million Shades of Blue: Integrating Expressive Arts Interventions in the Treatment of Early-Onset Depression Among Adolescents*

Expressive arts interventions are developmentally appropriate for working with this age group and lend themselves to fostering rapport, perspective, and choice within the therapeutic relationship. The present study explores four mental health clinicians' experiences working with expressive arts interventions in their treatment of adolescents presenting with early-onset depression. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews to better understand the complexities of treating this population and the ways in which expressive arts can be used to enhance therapeutic outcomes. Four major themes emerged from the data: (a) developmental considerations of the adolescent population, (b) conceptualizing early-onset depression, (c) clinical implications in the treatment of early-onset depression, and (d) integration of expressive arts interventions in therapeutic treatment. The results of the present study support and expand the current literature regarding the use of expressive arts interventions in treating early-onset depression among adolescent clients. Clinical and treatment implications point to a need for more research on the complexities associated with distinguishing early-onset depression as a symptom of trauma. Limitations of the present study and areas of future research are also discussed.

**Allison Mack**

*Men Transitioning Out of Incarceration: Counselors' Perspectives on Helping Men with Relational and Emotional Connection*

There is little research on the post-incarceration transition for men regarding interpersonal relationships and emotional connection ability. The present qualitative study explored potential factors involved in incarceration and post-incarceration, including male socialization, "toxic" masculinity, trauma, and resources and treatments available in correctional contexts. Different techniques and strategies for therapy with this marginalized population was explored, particularly in light of a feminist-based therapy approach. Qualitative data from four interviews with practicing psychologists and therapists who have worked with men who have experienced incarceration were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Seven major themes emerged from the data: *emotional intelligence; traditional male socialization; "toxic" masculinity; the correctional and prison system; areas of self-awareness for clinicians;*

*community support; and therapeutic strategies for treatment with post-incarcerated males.*

Results of this study highlight the importance of the development of emotional intelligence for males in therapy, the role of shame associated with vulnerable feelings and feeling expression, interaction between western dominant male socialization and trauma processing, and the need to uncover problems and unmet needs.

### **Ashley Martinez**

*“ Why Am I Here? ” : Exploring Counselors’ Experiences with Imposter Syndrome in First-Generation Latinx College Students*

The present study explores therapists’ work with imposter syndrome in first-generation Latinx college students, and the potential for using Relational Cultural Theory as an approach. After reviewing the current literature, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with three mental health clinicians who have experience working with first-generation Latinx college students that have experienced imposter syndrome. Data analysis was conducted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and consisted of coding each of the interviews and identifying the emergent themes. Four overarching themes were derived from the data:(a) effects of marginalization; (b) bicultural identity; (c) importance of giving back to community; and (d) breaking toxic intergenerational patterns. The results of the study support the existing literature that discusses the barriers that first-generation Latinx college students face while completing higher education and how it increases the feeling of imposter syndrome. Findings also provide additional insight regarding ways in which universities can better support Latinx students and families. Clinical implications, limitations of the present study, and areas of future research were also discussed.

### **Angela Marie Mello**

*The Power of Popular Culture: The Integration of Popular Culture into Therapy with Children and Adolescents Impacted by Parental Substance Use*

An extensive body of knowledge describes how parental substance misuse can negatively impact young people. Based on data from 2009 to 2014, it is estimated that one in eight children living in the United States resides with at least one parent struggling with substance use disorder. The present study explores the integration of pop culture into therapy with young people who have been impacted by parental substance use. Qualitative data was gleaned from three semi-structured interviews with practicing clinicians, and three overarching themes emerged, including children and adolescents impacted by parental substance use; treatment strategies and approaches to counseling young people; and the process of integrating pop culture into therapy. The findings of this study support the reviewed published research and expand upon current understandings by sharing the detailed clinical experiences of participants and encouraging advocacy and support for young clients and their families.

### **Isabel Perez**

*Exploring the Utilization of Integrated Career Counseling for Latinx First-Generation College Students: A Culturally Sensitive Approach*

The present study explores four counselors’ experiences utilizing an integrated career counseling approach with Latinx First-Generation College Students (FGCS). The primary goal of this study is to identify effective strategies that can support the unique needs and experiences of this population, particularly in relation to career development. The research involved gathering

qualitative data and conducting semi-structured interviews to better understand the effectiveness of using an integrated career counseling approach when compared to a traditional career counseling approach with Latinx FGCS. Seven primary themes emerged from the data: the impact of family, the unique college experience of Latinx FGCS, the comparison between integrated and traditional career counseling, integrated career counseling techniques, narrative career counseling, CBT career counseling, and the significance of the counseling relationship. The findings emphasize the importance of tailoring career counseling to the cultural background and individual needs of Latinx FGCS through a holistic and integrated approach. The study highlights the value of providing emotional support, fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging self-belief among these students. Overall, the results contribute to advancing knowledge on effective career counseling practices for Latinx FGCS and underscore the importance of adopting a culturally sensitive approach to enhance their career outcomes and well-being. Future directions may include providing recommendations for counselors and educators to better serve this population and promote greater equity in the career development process.

### **Holly Pittaway**

#### *Women's Systemic Concerns: Empowering Women Through Innerchild Work, One Part At a Time*

Intergenerational systemic oppression of women is a breeding ground for the silencing of little girls and women. Little girls are indoctrinated with messages from family systems, religious systems, societal messaging, and patriarchal systems to internalize shame and blame, losing a sense of their identity as a person who feels, has emotions, and needs. Women have become the backbone of a society that labels them as the caretaker, nurturer, and helper. This creates women to put their needs on the sideline, so much so it becomes hard to know what their needs are. Three Marriage and Family Therapists who use parts and inner child work with their clients were interviewed for this study to assess what adult women are seeking treatment for. They reported that many of their women clients are seeking treatment for not having agency, not being able to find and use their voice, and being internally stuck in cycles of shame, self-hatred, and self-blame, that was rooted in childhood trauma, complex trauma, and invalidating messages. Four superordinate themes emerged in this study: *Women in Treatment, Effects of Childhood Trauma Seen in Adult Clients, Systemic Impacts on Clients: Perpetuating Trauma, and Doing the Work: Modalities and Tools to Process Trauma*. In treatment, women are fighting to exist and create their own identity, have agency, and reparent their child self, all while working through systemic challenges.

### **Cayce Rollins**

#### *EMDR as Affirmative Care for Gender Dysphoria*

This qualitative research study aimed to investigate how culturally related trauma affects the mental health of transgender individuals and examined the use of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy within the context of affirmative care. The study sought to understand how EMDR therapy can effectively address gender dysphoria and enhance resilience among transgender individuals. The research focused on the influence of culturally related trauma as a significant contributing factor to the adverse mental health outcomes observed in gender diverse individuals, as well as the internalization of such trauma. Participant perspectives highlighted that being transgender itself is not a trauma, but rather the experience of being

transgender within the existing cultural context can be traumatic. Furthermore, the participants emphasized that gender dysphoria could be viewed as more of a cultural disorder than an individual problem. The findings shed light on the complex interplay between trauma and cultural factors, emphasizing gender dysphoria as a phenomenon shaped by both individual experiences and broader sociopolitical contexts. EMDR therapy emerged as a promising therapeutic intervention within an affirmative care framework to address culturally related trauma and the internalization of that trauma, serving as a tool to promote resilience. These findings contributed to the existing body of literature on transgender mental health, emphasizing the need for affirmative care models that move beyond pathologizing trans identities.

### **Miah Therese Aquino Sabas**

#### *Living in Liminality: Exploring the Therapeutic Experiences of Asian LGBTQ+ Parents and Future-Parents*

Asian LGBTQ+ parents' representation in society remains limited, highlighting the need for further research on their experiences of intersecting forms of oppression related to their parenting identity. Currently, there is limited literature available regarding the approaches mental health practitioners can employ to provide culturally sensitive therapy for Asian LGBTQ+ individuals who are parents. To address this gap, the present study adopts interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to examine semi-structured interviews conducted with three clinicians offering mental health services to Asian LGBTQ+ clients who are either currently parents or are considering parenthood in California. The analysis revealed three key themes: *a) Oppression hardening us; b) Therapist as the passenger, client as the driver; and c) the Parents we hope to become.* The findings indicate that personal encounters with intersecting oppressions influence the parenting practices of Asian LGBTQ+ clients and may manifest as internalized oppression. Therapeutic interventions suggested included fostering self-compassion and embracing the coexistence of multiple truths, practicing cultural humility, and grieving shared experiences of oppression. Furthermore, the experiences of oppression inform Asian LGBTQ+ parents' aspirations and shape their vision of the parents they aspire to be for their children.

### **Louise “Lulu” Tsai**

#### *Exploring Therapeutic Approaches for Bisexual Women Battling Minority Stress*

Bisexual women make up a large portion of the LGBTQ+ community, however, the attention and support they receive as a marginalized minority is scarce. In addition to battling a wide range of stereotypes and microaggressions, they also face invalidation from both the straight and queer community. Over time, these experiences accumulate into minority stress, which can be detrimental to physical and mental health. The current study aims to better understand how bisexual women are uniquely impacted by minority stress and effective therapeutic approaches that may be helpful in working with this population. Four counseling professionals, all of whom identified as queer women of color, were interviewed regarding their clinical experiences in working with female bisexual clients. Participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method through an internet search of LGBTQ-specializing mental health professionals. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured format in which each participant was asked a series of preselected questions as well as additional questions that emerged during the discussion. Findings revealed a variety of minority stressors including invalidation, stereotypes, lack of representation, and cultural conflicts, as well as several treatment interventions such as feminist approaches, psychoeducation, affirmation, and community support. Much of these findings



coincided with existing literature with several areas left for further exploration, particularly areas involving cultural considerations and treatment approaches.

**Jaelyn Young**

*Elite Athletes and Their Transition Out of Sports*

The present qualitative study explores elite athletes and their transition out of sports. A review of relevant literature is also provided and was used to analyze data collected from three semi-structured interviews. The data revealed six major themes: (a) mental health professionals defining elite, (b) mental health issues, (c) relationship issues, (d) shame, stigma, and barriers to treatment, (e) gender differences when transitioning, and (f) interventions used to treat elite athletes. The results of the present study support and expand the current literature regarding mental health professionals and their work with elite athletes. Clinical implications, limitations of the present study, and areas of future research are also discussed.