

Yessenia Alvarado*Therapists' Conceptualization and Treatment of Mexican American Caregivers of Alzheimer's Disease*

The number of individuals being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease is rapidly increasing, especially within the Latino community, creating a desperate need for caregivers. Although research is limited in this area, recent literature focuses on cultural influences that may impact treatment modalities to support caregivers. The specific purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how therapists conceptualize and understand the experiences of Mexican American caregivers as well as their perceptions of how cultural influences affect the decisions to seek help. Several themes surfaced related to the cultural and family influences that may interfere with caregivers' quality of life. Participants in the study also discussed the ways they understand caregivers' core beliefs and values, as well as the strategies and approaches they use with those who have a more traditional background. Although the results of this study support similar findings in the current research, differences in the treatment approaches were also addressed.

Sarah Atchison*Exploring How Counselors Empower Women to Turn Against Eating Problems*

This qualitative study explores the use of narrative therapy and how mental health clinicians utilize it in therapy with women who struggle with eating problems. There are many women who struggle with eating problems and this focus was important to gather alternative approaches that may be more beneficial than the current treatment as usual. Four clinicians were interviewed about their experience using narrative therapy with women struggling with eating problems. Six major themes emerged from the data: (a) a complex problem, (b) discourses, (c) Limitations with current treatment, (d) narrative stance, (e) panning for gold, and (f) therapist's responsibility. The results demonstrated that clinicians that utilize narrative therapy are given the platform to empower women with eating problems. Results of this study give implications for further studies to analyze the application and productiveness of narrative theory with women struggling with eating problems.

Jennifer Balidio*Thousands of Miles From Home: How Therapists Experience Culturally Sensitive Strategies for Asian International Students Experiencing Acculturative Stress*

Despite the prominent presence of international students and their contributions to the United States, international students have received very limited attention from college and mental health researchers. There have been minimal and limited attempts at providing culturally sensitive assistance and resources for international students. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ways that therapists conceptualize and work with international students experiencing acculturative stress. Results from this study may add to our knowledge of developing more culturally sensitive and appropriate strategies for working with this population. For this study, four mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experiences. Qualitative data analysis revealed seven salient themes related to gender issues, institutionalized policies and norms, external pressure, culture of the Asian American experience, clinical strategies, culturally sensitive strategies, and therapist qualities. Findings from this study offer insight into how therapists can increase cultural sensitivity in order to better assist clients presenting with acculturative stress. Implications for therapists working with international students are discussed, along with directions for future research.

Lindsay Burt

Exploring Transgender Identity Formation: Counselors' Perspectives on Utilizing Affirmative and Post-Modern Approaches

The present study explores counselors' perspectives on the utilization of post-modern and affirmative approaches with transgender clients. A review of the literature outlines specific challenges for the transgender population, post-modern theoretical explorations of transgender identities, as well as professional ethical guidelines in working with transgender individuals. The present study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol to interview five licensed clinicians on the use of post-modern and affirmative approaches with transgender clients.

Phenomenological reduction was used to group together common themes in a team format. The concept of triangulation was applied by independently reading through the data to see if the common grouping of themes still seemed to apply. Five major themes emerged from the data: (a) problems of social discourses, (b) strengthening affirmative connections, (c) aspects of therapeutic conversations, (d) externalization process, and (e) counselor process. Implications for the field of counseling, areas of future research, and limitations are discussed.

Ashley Devine

Torn Between Two Cultures: Conceptualization of Social Anxiety in Asian American College Students

Social anxiety disorder (SAD) can lead to feelings of intense apprehension and fear of being scrutinized while engaging in social interaction or performance, resulting in maladjustment and psychosocial impairment. Current literature about SAD in Asian American college students indicate that identification with an interdependent *self-construal*, the way in which people define themselves in terms of their relationships with others is associated with elevated social anxiety, however it did not necessarily translate into behavior impairment or psychopathology. When comparing cross-cultural values, the question about the applicability of the Western conceptualization of social anxiety for Asian American populations emerges. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore cultural bias in the conceptualization of social anxiety. Four clinicians identified as having expertise with this topic were interviewed. Thematic analysis yielded three major themes with subsequent subthemes in parenthesis: (1) therapists' conceptualization of social anxiety (relevance of *DSM*, state vs. trait, and adaptiveness), (2) collective cultural values (cultural conditioning and acculturative stress), (3) culturally-relevant interventions (psychoeducation, cognitive behavioral therapies, mindfulness practices, and family systems). These results confirm, contradict, and elaborate on current literature findings specific to this issue. Overall, this study recognized how a more comprehensive conceptualization and treatment approach of SAD may be warranted when working with Asian Americans that incorporates multidimensional perspectives, yet individualized to the client such that customization of interventions is often necessary.

Diana Donjuan

Unacknowledged Rape: Mental Health Professionals' Accounts with Helping Women Process Non-Consensual Sexual Experiences

Unacknowledged rape is a phenomenon in which women do not label their experience as rape even though it meets the legal definition (Wilson & Miller, 2015). This qualitative study examined the impact of culture on unacknowledged rape, the outcomes from the experience, and

treatment methods utilized by professionals. There is limited research on unacknowledged rape in the currently literature, especially for Latinas. This study seeks to gain further understanding about the reasons why women do not acknowledge their experience with rape, and treatment methods that are useful for this population. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four mental health professionals. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and the data was analyzed for major themes. Seven themes of (a) cultural influences, (b) marginalization, (c) blame, (d) secrecy, (e) unique experiences, (f) treatment, and (g) trust and safety, along with twenty subthemes emerged from the data. Results confirmed that culture has a significant impact on the labeling process and emphasized the importance of the therapeutic alliance.

Tsai-ling Fraher

It Takes One to Know One: Experiences of Chinese-Speaking Therapists Working with Chinese Immigrant Clients

Psychotherapy/Counseling is a Western discipline that, in spite of its demonstrated benefit for improved mental health, is often misunderstood at best, and stigmatized at worst, by people of other origins such as the Chinese people. Due to the elevated risks of mental health deterioration brought on by immigration and acculturation process, it seems a pressing matter to bridge the gap between the psychotherapy profession/treatment and those who could benefit from it. In this qualitative study Chinese-speaking bi-lingual, bi-cultural psychotherapists were interviewed about their experiences working with the Chinese immigrant population. The themes that emerged were identified include: (a) “becoming a therapist”, which reveals each participant’s personal and professional identity development process; (b) “profile of the client” paints an image of the Chinese immigrant clients through each participant’s professional impression; (c) “therapeutic process” details the challenges and advantages of working with this population as well as each participant’s idea of best practices for successful outcomes.

Natalie Gower

Counselors Experience Utilizing Emotionally Focused Therapy with Latino/a Couples’

Emotionally focused therapy is a well-studied evidence based treatment that has proven to be successful in treating couples experiencing marital distress. However, much of the research conducted is limited to Caucasian samples with little information on the impact culture may have in treating Latino/a couples. For the present study, three mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experiencing using the EFT modality with Latino/a couples. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format and information was analyzed to identify themes that emerged. The data suggested six themes including: (1) primary concerns of couples entering therapy, (2) cultural values or beliefs and the roles they play within the relationship, (3) barriers to treatment, (4) universality of EFT in relation to culture, (5) culturally based views of psychotherapy, and (6) cultural competence of therapists. Results of this study found limitations in the practice of EFT with Latino/a couples as well as implications this could pose for clinicians in utilizing this modality with culturally diverse clients. Recommendations for future research were discussed in order further understand the experience of Latino/a couples receiving this form of treatment.

Samantha Gulotta

Addressing Social Isolation in Children with Cancer: the Potential Benefits of Group Therapy as a Psychological Treatment Modality

This qualitative study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the use and effectiveness of group therapy as a potential psychological treatment modality to treat social isolation in children with cancer. Current literature on the topic including psychosocial effects of childhood cancer and the effectiveness of group therapy with parallel populations was reviewed and evaluated. Four participants that work with pediatric oncology patients in a hospital setting were recruited, contacted through various websites, and interviewed in-person using a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were transcribed, and the data were reviewed and categorized into themes by a data analysis team. The themes that emerged were (a) appreciation for life, (b) hope and optimism, (c) self-preservation, (d) repercussions of a cancer diagnosis, (e) creating a space for “cross-polonization of empathy,” and (f) differences in coping across culture. Comparison to relevant literature, clinical implications, directions for future research, and limitations of the study are discussed.

Julia Harrison

Examining How Counselors Promote Healthy Identity Development among Biracial Youth

The present study examined the how counselors promote healthy identity development among biracial (African American and Caucasian) youth. Four mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experience working with this population. Information was gathered through a semi-structured interview format and analyzed to address common themes and differences between the participants that may confirm or negate previous literature. The results indicated eight major themes and nine minor themes. Major themes were: sense of belonging, culture, parents’ cultural identity, environment, discrimination, colorblindness, identity development, and lastly, openness of the therapist. Results suggest that counselors could promote healthy identity development among biracial youth by listening, understanding, and validating the cultural identity of biracial youth without inflicting personal bias and assumptions. The participants explored several approaches that could assist biracial youth in processing and understanding their cultural identity. Results of the study and limitations are further discussed.

Insia Hirawala

Muslim’s Identity Development: Therapy to Counteract Oppression

Hate crimes due to Islamophobia have been increasing since 2001. Being a Muslim in an environment that is marginalizing towards Islam often impacts identity development, especially among youth who are immersed in this formative stage of life. The literature on identity development of Muslim youth reveals that there are often two strong dominant reactions, battling Islamophobia and advocating for Muslim rights, or else being crippled by the fear of oppression and even abuse and violence. Unfortunately, with limited research available on how to help cultivate healthy identity development, the present study explores this area of concern by interviewing mental health professionals about their experiences and expertise when working with Muslim youth. The findings indicate that identifying one’s locus of control and self-compassion are important strategies, as well as confirming the research on what builds successful identity development and minimizes the negative effects of developing an identity in a marginalized environment.

Amy Hollenbeck

An Exploration of Counselors’ Experience Working with Individuals Diagnosed with Early-Stage Dementia

The vast majority of research on mental health care and dementia is heavily focused on caregivers and family members. Yet very few studies examine the use of therapy with individuals in the early stages of the disease. This qualitative study examined how mental health clinicians work with individuals diagnosed with early-stage dementia through the numerous challenges that often accompany the diagnosis, such as changes in mood and lowered quality of life. Four participants were interviewed in a semi-structured interview format regarding their work with individuals in the early stages of dementia. Several themes emerged from the interviews: grief and loss, comorbid mental illness, therapeutic approaches, treatment interventions, support and social engagement, challenges faced by mental health clinicians, barriers to treatment, education, and cultural and gender differences. The implications for clinical practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Kylie Kellas

Therapist's Experiences: EMDR as Treatment for Disorganized Attachment in Parents

This is a qualitative study of therapists' use of EMDR to treat disorganized attachment in parents. Those with disorganized attachment disproportionately struggle with pathology such as personality disorders, aggression, and functionality in daily life situations as with work, relationships, and family (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2009; Beeney et al., 2016; Paetzold, Rholes, & Kohn, 2015). Attachment is intergenerationally transmitted through the caregiving relationship (Borelli, David, Crowley & Mayes, 2010; van IJzendoorn, 1995). Thus treating a parent has implications of benefitting the children in their care. A semi-structured interview was conducted with four mental health clinicians. Each clinician uses attachment as a theoretical framework in addition to EMDR therapy. Data analysis revealed five themes: window of tolerance, resourcing, dissociation, theoretical modalities, and treatment outcomes. Implications for future research and clinical implications are discussed.

Jordanna L. Kirschner

The Subtle Influences of Temperament in Social Anxiety During Adolescence

Social anxiety left untreated during adolescence can have detrimental effects on mental health lasting well into adulthood, especially considering identification with friendships is such an integral part of identity development during this stage of life. There is a vast array of research on the topic with most of the literature predominately conceptualizing the condition from a diagnostic perspective where identification of risk factors is crucial in the assessment process. One of the main risk factors in this literature is presence of a behaviorally inhibited temperament. Yet, sparse attention is given to how such a temperament could act as a protective factor in development of anxiety and if therapists actually utilize such a perspective in their conceptualization and treatment process. Further, sparse attention is given to understanding the condition from a sociocultural perspective. The aim of this study was to understand how therapists conceptualize and treat social anxiety with particular attention on the conceptualization process considering the theoretical nature of this study. The results were consistent with the predominant literature in that social anxiety was primarily conceptualized from a diagnostic perspective. In adding to a more comprehensive understanding of social anxiety, a sociocultural and strength based perspective of the results in combination with the current literature was proposed.

Howard Lee

Exploring Eating Disorders, Obesity, and Self-Control

Studies have consistently shown greater self-control and lower impulsivity to be associated with lower BMI, and CBTs efficacy in treating eating disorder. However, the studies have often focused around specific relationships between two specific factors, and it does not represent a complete picture of what the mental health field actually experiences and perceives of eating disorders and obesity. The aim of the current study was to explore mental health workers specific experience and perspective on the topic of eating disorders, obesity, and self-control. Participants were three licensed mental health professionals that have worked with either eating disorders or obesity. Participants were interviewed individually, and asked a set of 14 primary questions. Results suggest that the most participants do not perceive self-control to have a significant role in eating disorders or obesity, and reject the notion of obesity as a disease. These findings suggest a gap between the medical and mental health field, and that the mental health field tends to approach eating disorder and obesity from a holistic perspective.

Angie Nguyen

Exploring the Use of Culturally Competent Therapy with Adult Asian Immigrants Who Develop Resilience as a Positive Impact of Trauma

This study examines resilience as a positive impact of trauma for Asian immigrants who survived traumatic experiences. Four sampled therapists who employed culturally competent practice as a modality were interviewed in semi-structured protocols. Results were compared with past literature. Findings illustrated complex variables in sociocultural context, personal characteristics, external factors, and therapeutic factors were influential in fostering growth after adversity. The variables were further illuminated as the following eight themes: (1) stigma and shame surrounding mental health, (2) cultural barriers between clients and therapists, (3) adjustment issues with two subthemes of coping with adjustment difficulties, the role of family and community support, (4) sense of self-worth as influenced by negative self-talk, high self-expectations, and hope and optimism for the future, (5) acceptance through faith, (6) trust and the therapeutic relationship with three subthemes of importance of trust, connection-building through cultural competence, patient is a virtue for therapist, (7) practical and goal-oriented approach in treatment, and (8) flexibility and creativity. Implications for practice and directions for future research are discussed.

Lisa Paer

Burnout in High-Achieving High School Students: Conceptualization and Treatment

Counselors' conceptualization and treatment of burnout in high-achieving high school students were investigated in this study. Four counselors in a high-achieving high school were interviewed in a semi-structured format about their experiences working with this population. Three major themes emerged: (a) features and symptoms of burnout, (b) factors related to burnout, and (c) treatment of burnout. Features and symptoms of burnout included difficult detection, maladaptive external behaviors, helplessness and self-doubt, and shame and self-blame. Factors related to burnout were comprised of perfectionism and fear of failure, high expectations and pressure from others, academic rigor and extracurricular obligations, and lack of self-care. Counselors treated burnout by developing trust, teaching skills, providing support, working as a team with parents and school personnel, and promoting self-care. These results suggest that there is a high prevalence of burnout in high-achieving high school students and that

not enough is being done to prevent it. School personnel should be cognizant of the symptoms of burnout and remain vigilant in detecting the signs before it worsens and becomes paralyzing.

Shannon Shaffer Peterson

Talk Therapy for Clients Who Experience Psychosis.

There are 9.8 million adults living with Serious Mental Illness in the United States, and just over half receive even the “minimally adequate treatment” of medication plus at least four visits with a psychiatrist or other doctor per year. Some of these receive case management or other social services as well, but only a small percentage are provided with any sort of talk therapy. An extensive review of literature indicates that talk therapy is much more commonly provided in the UK, including a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy adapted specifically for clients who experience psychosis, or CBTp. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the benefits and outcomes of talk therapy for adults who experience psychosis from the perspective of three therapists with extensive experience in the field. These therapists found that therapy was helpful in improving clients’ quality of life, relationships, and meaningful activity when combined with medication, except

Jackie Scherer

Healing the Wounds of Childhood Emotional Abuse

The issue of childhood emotional abuse can have long-term effects on an individual’s overall functioning. Based on current research findings, there appears to be a lack of information on childhood emotional abuse as compared to childhood physical or sexual abuse. Further research suggests that childhood emotional abuse survivors’ may encounter interpersonal and psychological difficulties. Some researchers identify group therapy as a preferred method to treat survivors of childhood emotional abuse, although the therapists interviewed in this study mentioned several other options such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, trauma resiliency model techniques, person-centered approach, among others. This study focuses on the themes related to the therapists’ experience, their conceptualization of presenting complaints, and strategies and treatment approaches that help reduce the impact of childhood emotional abuse.

Angelica Smith

Examining the Use of Mindfulness-Based Therapy for Young Adult Women with Generalized Anxiety Disorder

This qualitative study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the use of mindfulness-based interventions to treat young adult women with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Current literature on the topic, including causes and consequences of GAD in young women, the role of mindfulness in GAD, and mindfulness-based therapy as a treatment modality for GAD, was reviewed and evaluated. Four clinicians with experience in using mindfulness-based therapy with this population were recruited and contacted through *Psychology Today* and were interviewed in-person with a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were transcribed, and the data were reviewed and categorized into themes by a data analysis team. The themes that emerged were (a) acceptance and compassion, (b) worry as a function, (c) importance of the therapeutic relationship, (d) using practical mindfulness, (e) decentering, (f) psychoeducation, (g) increasing awareness of the present moment, and (h) success in using mindfulness. Comparison to relevant

literature, clinical implications, directions in future research, and limitations of the study are discussed.