

Magaly Acosta

Bilingual Counselors Helping Immigrant Families Resolve Interpersonal Conflict

Latino immigrant families are faced with multiple challenges that can affect the family unit. There has been considerable research noting different family dynamics that can often lead to difficulties resulting in interpersonal conflict. This study examined how bilingual counselors work with Latino immigrant families experiencing conflict. Four participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview based on their expertise and experience working with the Latino population. There were six major themes that were derived from the data consisting of: (1) personal connection, (2) common issue: acculturation, (3) family as a strength, (4) self-disclosure, (5) cultural sensitivity, and (6) different approaches. The implications of the study were also discussed in terms of what this means for bilingual therapist working with this heterogeneous population. Future areas of research were also proposed.

Lori Branham

Therapists' Experiences Using Mindfulness Meditation to Treat Depression, Anxiety, and Pain in Clients Diagnosed with Chronic Illness

This is a qualitative study that examines the experiences of therapists using mindfulness-based techniques to treat depression, anxiety, and pain in clients diagnosed with chronic illness. The study opens with a definition of mindfulness, and then describes the psychological distresses and physical symptoms commonly experienced by people living with chronic illness. Next, a review of literature is presented with focus on using mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), and acceptance commitment therapy (ACT) to treat depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and fatigue in this population. Following this is the method of study in which three therapists experienced in utilizing mindfulness-based techniques with chronically ill clients are interviewed. This section explains what procedures were used, how the interviews were conducted, researcher biases, and an examination of the data. Themes that emerged during data analysis included the integration of mindfulness with therapy, the therapist as practitioner, depression, anxiety, pain, and group therapy and these are presented in the results section. Lastly, the discussion section illustrates the commonalities between a review of the selected research and the data gathered from the participants. Also listed are clinical implications, limitations of the study, possible implications for future research, and finally personal reflections of the primary researcher.

Jennifer Carroll

Midlife Without the Crisis: Using Relational Cultural Theory and Self-Compassion with Women in Midlife

Midlife is an area that is understudied and often misunderstood. Examining this population is extremely difficult because the life stage covers 20-30 years and the experiences of individuals are varied and diverse. Women continue to make up the bulk of psychotherapy patients, therefore greater understanding of this life stage for women is crucial for providing effective treatment. This qualitative study examines the use of Relational Cultural Theory and Self-Compassion to increase well-being for women in midlife. Four therapists were interviewed using a semi-structured format. The data

analysis revealed 6 major themes: (1) disconnection, (2) midlife transitions, (3) marginalization of women in midlife, (4) creating connections, (5) self-compassion, and (6) empowering women. Findings from this study suggest the use of Relational Cultural Theory and self-compassion with women in midlife can enhance well-being and increase self-worth.

Courtney Conlon

Exploring the Effects of Therapist's Pregnancy on the Process of Psychotherapy

Many female therapists will experience pregnancy while in practice. Yet, despite this being a common occurrence little research has been conducted on the experiences of the pregnant therapist and its impact on the client or therapeutic relationship. The current study consisted of interviews with six therapists who had all recently been pregnant while in practice. The goal of the study was to examine experiences around therapist/client relationship and how pregnancy may elicit transference and countertransference experiences. Several themes emerged from these interviews. Consistent with past research, it was found that pregnancy elicited countertransference from the therapist as well as the therapist becoming the subject in the room. Other past research was not supported. In these interviews, therapists did not report strong transference arising as a result of pregnancy disclosure. In fact, a consistent theme among these interviewees was that disclosure of pregnancy opened up an opportunity for their clients to decide that they were either done with therapy altogether or that they wanted to work that much harder in the room knowing the therapist was leaving. Further, all interviewed therapist's spoke of lack of training or education around the challenges presented by pregnancy. This research suggests that graduate training programs in counseling and clinical psychology should incorporate this matter into their coursework.

Dalia Dauod Fullingim

Counselors' Experiences with School-Based Treatments for Relational Aggression in Children and Adolescents

Self-esteem, confidence, self-image, and relational skills are developed throughout childhood and adolescence. During these crucial years of identity formation, individuals develop a sense of self and learn how to interact with others. It is precisely during this vulnerable stage that relational aggression occurs. Relational, or covert, aggression includes mockery, exclusionary behaviors, and rumor-spreading for personal gain at the cost of another's self-worth and sense of security. For the victims of relational aggression, this problem is tormenting and isolating, and victims feel helpless and alone. Due to the multi-faceted nature of relational aggression, school-based treatments seem to be the most promising, as they bring awareness to bullying and its effects and help change the school culture from one of accepting to one of condemning. A qualitative study on this topic was conducted whereby three mental health counselors were interviewed on their experiences with relational aggression and on their use of school-based methods. The results of this study implied that students, parents, and the community need to receive more psychoeducation on bullying and that psychoeducational group interventions and conflict mediation have been effective methods. This study also indicated that there currently exists a culture that normalizes and accepts relational aggression as a part of adolescent development, that current

methods are more reactive than proactive in their approaches, and that there is a hesitancy towards emotion-based interventions. This research and data will be beneficial in understanding the best approaches for dealing with bullying, and in devising effective school-based treatments in the future.

Mayra Esperanza Garcia

Exploring the Psychological Adaptation, Treatment Modalities Using Mindfulness, Spirituality, and other Counseling Techniques of Adults Who Acquire a Vision Impairment

In this qualitative study, counselors who work with adults who acquire visual impairment are the primary focus. Perceptions of visual impairment, grief process, transition and adjustment, and treatment modalities are researched in great detail. A total of three counselors were interviewed. Each counselor used various treatment modalities in order to help their clients cope with the loss of vision. When the data from each interview were gathered, qualitative data analysis was used to locate various themes. When individuals acquire a visual impairment, they grieve this particular loss experience a significant adaptation process to this specific disability. The seven themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews included: therapist traits, client emotions, entitlement vs. personal growth, collaboration, independence, adjustment and transition process, and building trust among clients.

Maribel Gonzalez

Examining the Use of Expressive Arts Therapy with Children and Adolescents Grieving Parental Loss

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the grief experiences of children and adolescents who have lost a parent to cancer. Three clinicians were interviewed about their experiences working with parentally bereaved children and adolescents while using various forms of expressive arts as a treatment modality. Seven major themes emerged from the data: (a) importance of support systems, (b) rituals and spirituality, (c) grief modeling, (d) therapeutic techniques, (e) rapport building, (f) emotional responses, (g) developmental stages, and the following minor themes gender, age, and culture differences. The results of this study showed the importance of having adequate family support and treatment to help this population process their grief. Results of this study also have implications for clinical application for further research to help promote adequate treatment for parentally bereaved children and adolescents.

Briana Maree Hammonds

Female Victims of Bullying: The Impact and What Can Be Done

The present study examined the problem of bullying on the female population and how it can be addressed in therapy. Four therapists were interviewed regarding their experience working with girls who have been bullied. Information was gathered through a semi-structured interview format and analyzed to address common themes and differences between the participants that may confirm or contradict previous literature. The results indicated seven major themes beginning with the issue of bullying, the unique difference in how girls bully, the importance of the therapeutic relationship and alliance, the benefits

and challenges, the impact of bullying on children and adults, how girls cope with peer victimization, and lastly the various treatment techniques. Results suggest that female bullying is underhanded and may significantly impact the victims in numerous ways. The participants explored several approaches that could assist victims in processing their experience. Results of the study and limitations are further discussed.

Raelynn Koehler

Examining How Counselors Use Creative Arts with Women Experiencing Severe Mental Illness

Women with severe mental illness (SMI) face numerous adversities. Although there exists a large literature on counseling women with SMI, there is little addressing the use of creative arts as a form of treatment. This study investigates how counselors use creative arts with women presenting a SMI diagnosis. Interviews with counseling professionals were conducted to better understand the dynamics of therapy with SMI clients and the use of creative arts as a part of a treatment modality. The results from this study illuminated five central themes. They were: (1) Client perceptions of self, (2) Nonverbal expression, (3) Normalization, (4) Stigma and discrimination and (5) Therapeutic Alliance. Lastly, the findings from this study may add to alternative approaches when treating women with SMI.

Abad Loza

Integrating Mexican Cultural Values and Mestizo Spirituality with Mexican Clients

This study explores an alternative approach that integrates cultural values and mestizo spirituality with Mexican individuals. Four therapists were interviewed regarding their experiences using multicultural perspectives and mestizo spirituality. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and qualitative analysis methods were used to analyze the data. The therapist reported the therapeutic role that cultural values, indigenous healing practices, and mestizo spirituality play in developing a therapeutic alliance with Mexican clients. Treatment themes focused on the integration of cultural values such as *personalismo*, *familismo*, *simpatia*, *respeto*, *fatalismo*, and *espiritismo*. Similarly, importance was placed in the ability to assist client's ability to gain self-awareness and knowledge that will ultimately strengthen the client's connection with spirituality. Implications for therapy and future research are discussed.

Beatriz Martinez

Therapists' Experiences Using Culturally-Sensitive Treatments with Latino Immigrants Suffering from Acculturative Stress

The recent growth of Latino immigrants in the United States has presented a great need for cultural competent interventions and treatments. Using a qualitative approach, this study explored therapists' experiences using culturally sensitive treatments with Latino immigrants suffering from acculturative stress. Analysis of the data revealed themes that endorsed the importance of addressing cultural characteristics when working with this population. From the analysis of the data four major themes emerged: the therapeutic relationship, culturally sensitive characteristics, appropriate interventions and conceptualizations, and stigmas that this population may hold regarding mental health services. These findings suggested the importance of using culturally sensitive

characteristics when working with this population, translated into customized interventions for each client. In addition, the implications for clinical practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research were discussed in this study.

Danielle Martinez

The Emphasis on Teacher-Student Relationships in Secondary Education During School-Based Intervention Consultation

Students perform below their capabilities or act out behaviorally for a variety of reasons. Schools scramble to provide adequate accommodations with their limited resources. States then mandate assessments and behavioral plans in order to rectify students' inappropriate externalizing behaviors. Research in early childhood development points to the teacher-child relationship as a possible solution, but limited research surrounds teacher-student relationships in secondary education. In this study, three school consultant professionals were interviewed regarding their experiences consulting with secondary education teachers concerning their classroom and student management. Ten themes arose from the research. The discussion aims to provide insight into the consultation process in light of the research and ultimately postulate the effects of adapting a relational consultation model.

Diana Martinez

The Comorbid Struggle: Therapists' Experiences Helping Adolescents with Addiction and Trauma

Much of the research on adolescent addiction has put emphasis on whether these struggles represent a way of self-medicating and coping after a traumatic event. Due to the challenges in working with this population and problem, little is known about which treatment modality is most effective. This results, in part, because therapists are unprepared and untrained to work with the comorbid issues. For the present study, three therapists specializing in working with adolescents who struggle with an addiction, as well as previous trauma, were interviewed to explore the ways they address the challenges they face. Results both confirm and go beyond the current understandings of adolescents who struggle with addiction and trauma and of gender differences, severity of the substance use, types of trauma experienced, and family support. An emphasis on the therapeutic alliance and building rapport with the client is suggested.

Colleen E. Michaels

Exploring How Counselors Use Emotion Focused Therapy with Heterosexual Couples Experiencing Infidelity

Infidelity is an issue that some couples experience during their marriage and dating relationships. Current literature was examined that surveyed this problem as well as emotion focused therapy. This treatment can be utilized by therapists to assist couples work through this trivial time in their relationship. The researcher interviewed four practicing clinicians who utilize EFT when working with couples and this problem. The results revealed seven major themes on this topic that were all analyzed and compared to the literature reviewed. The original purpose of this study was to explore what may drive a person to engage an affair. However, as the results were analyzed, it appeared that when

using EFT a therapist does not focus on pathologizing the unfaithful partner, but instead, concentrates on one's attachment to the other partner and the relationship.

Jill Murray

Exploring Therapists' Understanding of Male Gender Norms When Treating Young Adult Men with Addiction in a Residential Facility

Addiction is a non-discriminating, prevalent, and chronic relapsing disorder that plagues many individuals. Research examines male gender norms and suggests clinical implications for professionals working with men in addiction treatment. Current data also demonstrates an increased rate of heroin abuse and resultant negative consequences in young adult males entering residential treatment. However, research on the experience of young adult men in residential treatment and the interventions used to help them is scant. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore therapists' experience working with young adult men in residential treatment. Informed by the research, three mental health professionals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed for recurrent themes. Ten salient themes emerged indicating that addiction treatment is life-long process requiring continued treatment and support, with distinct therapeutic goals in residential and individual therapy. Moreover, the therapists shared their experiences working with young adult men and how they incorporated emotional expression, vulnerability, and identity into their work. Examination of the themes in light of the research elucidates several clinical implications related to therapeutic relationship, emotional regulation, and responsive interpersonal interaction.

Jessica Nguyen

Clinicians' Process of Using a Systems Approach with Children of Incarcerated Parents
Prison rates are increasing rapidly and the effects of incarceration are felt throughout the family system. Children are often times negatively affected by the loss of a parent to incarceration. In the following qualitative study, three mental health clinicians were interviewed regarding their knowledge of challenges and barriers that children of incarcerated parents may experience. Using a semi-structured interview methodology, the researcher was able to gain information regarding this population. Five major themes emerged through the data: 1) trauma/grief and loss, 2) basic needs, 3) self-worth, 4) the therapeutic relationship, and 5) collaboration. The study's results may offer insight to mental health professionals in their efforts to help children of incarcerated parents and their families.

Jennifer Ortiz

On the Trajectory to Dropout: Counselors' Experiences Working with Latino Males
Latino adolescent males have the highest dropout rate of any other gender or ethnicity in the United States. The literature reviewed suggests that issues of poverty, acculturation, trauma, lack of parental monitoring, and disengagement from school are largely associated with the trajectory of dropout. To examine this phenomenon further, a qualitative study was executed, and three mental health practitioners working for a large school district in Southern California were interviewed for this research. The interviewees were chosen for their various positions in the school district. One was a

licensed social worker that oversaw all the social worker interns in the district; one was a licensed psychologist who ran a specialized program for emotionally disturbed students; and one was a limited educational psychologist working specifically at two school sites. The data in the interviews substantiated the issues outlined in the literature review, and expanded on the research by indicating gaps in the research regarding prevention and intervention for this population. Some of the prominent themes in the interviews were identifying depression, eliciting parent involvement in the student's life, and educating the Latino population on the benefits of mental health services to re-engage their children in school.

Sinthia Ortiz

Examining How Counselors Work With the Associated Stresses of Being an Undocumented College Student

This study examines how environmental stressors impact the self-esteem and identities of undocumented Latino college student. This study discusses the barriers many undocumented college students may come across and how mental health professionals can help undocumented college students cope and find themselves in American Society. The research builds on existing literature that examines legal status as a barrier and how those barriers affect the mental health of undocumented college students. The participants were all psychologists that work and have had success with working with the undocumented population. The research questions were formulated by the researcher's personal experience with being an undocumented college student and personal experiences with providing mental health to the undocumented population. The data revealed eight major themes: fear, hopelessness, anxiety and worry, worthiness and shame, validation and empathy, use of self-disclosure, flexibility, resources, and normalizing client's experience.

Ramona RR. Perez

Therapists' Experiences Using Culturally Sensitive Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to Treat Latina Women Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a worldwide issue that has been taking place for many generations. Although domestic violence occurs among all different ages and ethnicities, it remains a topic that many victims struggle to talk about. The present study highlights the importance of addressing the concerns of Latina women, domestic violence, and the effectiveness of culturally sensitive cognitive behavioral therapy. The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore therapists' experiences using culturally sensitive cognitive behavioral therapy to treat Latina women who have experienced domestic violence. In order to obtain data for the study, three participants who have worked with Latina women and domestic violence utilizing culturally sensitive cognitive behavioral therapy were interviewed using an instrument of 15 questions. The analysis followed McLeod's five stages (2003) of examining the qualitative data. Following the analysis several themes were found which include: safety; the efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy, with two subthemes collaboration and building rapport and homework; education; language; cultural sensitivity; and individual versus group therapy. The results were then compared to current research related to the topic. Suggestions were then made for counseling practice and future study.

Ashley Philips*Exploring the Use of Emotion Focused Therapy with Heterosexual Couples Coping with Sexual Assault*

Sexual assault is an issue that many women are faced with in the United States. Most of the research around sexual assault focuses on the effects it has on survivors. There is a lack of research regarding the impact of sexual assault on women's intimate relationships and how their partners are influenced. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the impact of sexual assault on adult woman and her intimate relationships with men. It also examined the difficulties male partners experienced in the relationship. Lastly, this research explored the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) in treating these couples. Four participants were interviewed based upon their advanced training in EFT and experience in working with this population. Themes revolving around disconnection, safety, connection, and length of treatment were noted in the results. The results presented similar finding to the current research as well as adding to the existing research.

Maureen Saunders*Exploring How Therapists Integrate Spirituality in Counseling Women of Domestic Violence*

Spirituality comes from a natural, fundamental and basic nature within us. Spirituality allows one to get in touch with their true self-worth. Mental health professionals are required to work and focus on the whole person. Counselors who incorporate the spiritual side of women survivors of domestic violence may add more depth to their process of healing. Research has also shown that religion and spirituality cannot be separated, especially when researching women dealing with domestic violence (Bowland et al., 2011; Briggs & Dixon, 2013; Post & Wade, 2014; Senter & Caldwell, 2002). This qualitative study explored the ways therapists integrate spirituality in counseling women of domestic violence. A semi-structured interview with three therapists was conducted. The data analysis focused on six themes, which were: therapist, difference between religiosity and spirituality, religion and domestic violence, resistance, support and resources, and counselor's perceptions and dilemmas. The findings of this study suggest the use of spirituality in therapy can enhance the true self-worth of abused women.

Paul Schepps*Investigating How Therapists Apply Person- Centered Principles with Traumatized Children*

The purpose of this study was to determine how therapists use person-centered principals in working with children and adolescents who have experienced a traumatic event such as sexual abuse. Additionally, the author wanted to better understand how to create the perfect therapeutic window in order to facilitate the healing process of traumatized children. The author accomplished this by doing a review of the empirical literature as well as conducting a qualitative study with three participants who were all licensed Marriage and Family Therapists. The research revealed that children are being

victimized at an alarming rate. Both the literature and this study seem to indicate that, although many evidenced based practices appear to be sufficient for positive treatment outcomes, clinicians who took special care to establish a solid therapeutic relationship using person-centered techniques such as empathy, warmth, and unconditional positive regard, showed better outcomes than those who did not. This study revealed a need for further research focusing specifically on non-directive person-center therapy with children who have experienced sexual abuse in order to investigate if the therapeutic relationship is enough to effect positive changes without the need for any sort of directive therapies.

Krystal Schultz

A Loss is a Loss: Counselors Experiences Working with Adolescents Experiencing Ambiguous Loss

Adolescence is a time of change and can be a difficult transition for some; loss makes that transition even more difficult. Much empirical research has been done on the impact of parent loss during adolescence in regards to a parent dying. There is limited research about how ambiguous loss impacts adolescents. For the present study three therapists who specialize in ambiguous loss and working with adolescents were interviewed to explore how they experience adolescents and ambiguous loss. Results both align with current research on loss and extend current knowledge of how to help an adolescent grieve an ambiguous loss.

Heydieh Soroush

Counselors Use of Mindfulness and Integrative Spirituality in the Mental Health Treatment of Middle Eastern Americans

There is ample literature indicating the positive outcomes of utilizing spiritual and mindfulness-based practices in the treatment of mental health issues; however the effectiveness of integrating these treatments cross-culturally remains a subject of debate (Smalley et al., 2009). The present study examines counselor experiences, challenges, and successes in the therapeutic application of nondenominational spirituality and mindfulness-based approaches with the Middle Eastern population. A review of the current literature and an in-depth qualitative assessment was conducted to gather further information on the yielding impact of using these modalities with the Middle Eastern population. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five counselors, each of whom had expertise with administering mindfulness-based and spiritually integrative treatments with individuals of Middle Eastern descent. Results were analyzed based on McLeod's (2003) five-stage qualitative data analysis. Relevant themes that emerged from the interviews, included: (a) shame versus compassion, (b) self-righteousness versus openness, (c) freedom versus suffering, (d) acculturation, and (e) therapists' spiritual journey. The results suggested an overall positive impact in the covert and overt applications of nondenominational spirituality and mindfulness-based approaches in the treatment of challenges unique to this population. Potential clinical implications for these findings support the increased need for clinician development and training in both spiritually integrative treatments and culturally sensitive practices with the Middle Eastern population.

Amanda Thoreson

Fibromyalgia is characterized by wide-spread chronic pain with an unknown etiology. Currently, many individuals suffering from chronic pain are treated by pain management and primary care physicians for the management of physical pain. However, most recent empirical research suggests chronic pain may also be a physical manifestation of emotional pain or trauma. The present qualitative research study conceptualizes fibromyalgia and chronic pain with an emphasis on effective psychotherapeutic treatment. Four participants were interviewed, and results were presented after a thematic analysis of their responses was conducted. All participants disclosed previous and current experience in treating clients with various chronic pain conditions and syndromes from a psychotherapeutic perspective. The results confirm as well as elaborate on current literature pertaining to this issue.

Samantha Werner*The Mother-Daughter Relationship: Therapists Working with Latino Families on Communication Issues*

Like many relationships, the connection between mothers and adolescent daughters within the Latino culture tends to have an important impact on the daughter as she progresses through adolescence. Sometimes, problems arise within the relationship that require additional help in the form of therapy. This qualitative study examines the ways in which therapists work with Latina mothers and daughters to improve communication issues that may affect the overall quality of their relationship. Four therapists working in community agencies were interviewed based on their clinical experiences with the Latino population. Results include themes that focused on traditional Latino family values, elements of the mother-daughter relationship, and approaches utilized by the participants. The results of this study align with cited literature, help connect mother-daughter interactions with their cultural and family values, and describe the importance of the therapeutic relationship. New findings suggest that working within the value system is important while negotiating those values with the dominant culture in which the adolescent lives. Moreover, the theoretical approaches of the therapists did not seem to matter as long as the therapeutic alliance was strong. Additionally, clinical implications, areas of future research, and limitations are discussed.