

Fall 2024 Final Project Abstracts

Anjali Acharya

Working with the Trauma Narratives of Asian Americans with Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) is being considered a distinct diagnosis compared to post-traumatic stress disorder in research and praxis for mental health clinicians. Trauma narratives are a budding form of treatment for complex post-traumatic stress symptoms. However, Asian Americans and their mental health struggles are understudied, especially in relation to trauma and treatment. This qualitative study sought to understand exactly what the trauma narratives are for Asian Americans with complex post-traumatic stress disorder and how counselors work with these trauma narratives in the therapeutic process. The experiences of four counselors were gathered through semi-structured interviews and the data obtained was coded using the McLeod method. Results yielded nine major themes, the most significant being contexts of trauma experiences, trauma narratives describe CPTSD effects, and therapeutic effects of using the trauma narrative. New findings for the field included themes of intergenerational trauma in trauma narratives, CPTSD effects of responsibility and lack of voice, and therapeutic effects of distance, clarity, and empowerment using the trauma narrative. These findings could open new conversations amongst mental health clinicians and be further explored in future research, while improving the paucity of literature on Asian American communities.

Henry Ayesiga

The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in Addressing Self-Esteem in Teenagers

This research investigates the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in addressing self-esteem issues among adolescents, focusing on the impact of familial, cultural, and societal influences. The study seeks to understand how ACT can enhance self-esteem and improve mental health outcomes. Participants included three mental health professionals experienced in ACT, who provided insights through semi-structured interviews. The methodology involved purposive sampling and rigorous data analysis, including immersive engagement, open and axial coding, and peer review. Key findings reveal that ACT promotes psychological flexibility through mindfulness and acceptance, with significant themes emerging around parental pressure, cultural influences, and the role of social media. The study highlights the importance of a non-judgmental therapeutic approach, the use of metaphors, and psychoeducation in fostering resilience and self-awareness among adolescents. Despite promising results, the research acknowledges limitations such as small sample size and short duration, suggesting the need for further studies to explore long-term effectiveness and mechanisms of ACT. The findings underscore the necessity for culturally sensitive and individualized therapy approaches, with future research recommended to focus on integrating media literacy and addressing gender-specific pressures in therapeutic interventions.

Genevieve C. Azor

Shall We Play Keepy Uppy: Clinicians' Experiences Working with Family Caregivers of Children and Individuals with ASD Utilizing CBT and other interventions

This study explores the experiences that clinicians have in working with caregivers of children and individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Four mental health professionals were

interviewed using a semi structured approach. Three major themes emerged from these interviews which were comprised of the caregivers' experience and challenges, the resources and support systems that caregivers navigate through, and the clinical interventions and treatments that are used for caregivers. The results of this study support some of the existing literature that discusses the population of caregivers caring for individuals with ASD. More research must be done to expand upon the data set for caregivers.

Miriam Barbara Bello

The Forgotten Ones: Clinicians' Experiences Counseling Family Caretakers Using Group Therapy and Other Modalities

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the complex experiences of family caretakers in balancing caring for their loved ones as well as themselves. The research explored the effectiveness of group therapy, amongst other modalities, as a method of treatment for the population, as well as whether or not vicarious trauma is an area of concern. The researcher conducted interviews using a semi-structured approach with three mental health therapists and a geriatric care manager. Two major themes emerged from the interviews: experiences of caregivers and pathways to healing. Results of the study found that caretaker experiences are often complex and multifaceted. In addition, psychoeducation and group therapy were useful interventions in helping uplift family caretakers by providing techniques and community support. Findings reflect the need for more involvement in aging related studies to create more dynamic approaches to support caretakers and facilitate healing.

Ashley Bush

Nourishing Identities: Exploring the Role of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Addressing Disordered Eating in Sexual Minority Women of Color

While there are copious amounts of research on disordered eating and the treatment of disordered eating, there is a dearth proportion of academic literature that explores the onset, maintenance, and treatment of disordered eating in sexual minority women of color (SM-WOC). The purpose of this qualitative research study is to uncover the ways that disordered eating develops and impacts sexual minority women of color and how to treat their unsustainable eating habits with concepts of ACT. The researcher conducted three-semi structured interviews with therapists who specialize in working with disordered eating in SM-WOC and incorporate ACT in their work with these women. Thematic analysis was used to sift through the transcripts to reveal themes that were present across all participants. The themes identified were the SM-WOC experience, the body is political, and treatment. The results suggest that SM-WOC's intersecting identities heavily impact how women cope in a white supremacy patriarchal society. The findings also illuminated the need for more culturally informed treatment modalities that unpack the complexity of this population's place in society.

Rhea Chowdhary

Therapists' Experiences Working with Adolescent Girls Experiencing Bullying

The present study initially sought to analyze therapists' experience with using sandtray therapy when working with adolescent girls who are victims of cyberbullying. After a lack of qualifying participants, the topic was expanded to examine therapists' experience working with bullied adolescent girls, with a focus on specific considerations and helpful interventions. Three participants were interviewed with a series of questions to learn about their specific experiences.

Subsequently, the transcripts were analyzed for major and minor themes. The participants agreed that adolescents are in a critical developmental period with hormonal imbalances and impulsivity and that cyberbullying is a unique topic that may lead to more severe bullying than in-person bullying. Participants also acknowledged that parents may be the bullies in adolescents' lives and may contribute to an environment at home that the counselors have interpreted as strikingly similar to peer bullying. Each participant also acknowledged that victims of bullying often have a lack of control over the situation, creating the need for more coping skills and resiliency. Participants agreed that CBT, attentive listening, and creating a safe space were the most helpful interventions for these victims. Clinicians may benefit by being aware of the developmental considerations and most helpful interventions when working with this population and issue.

Angela Harris

Healing in the Face of Health Inequities: Therapy for Black Women's Emotional and Physical Wellbeing

Black women have faced longstanding disparities in healthcare, with minimal changes in the structural framework of the field. This study examined the most effective treatment interventions for Black women who have experienced these health disparities and identified necessary improvements to address their unique needs better. The researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews over Zoom with Black women therapists to gain their perspectives on treatment modalities. Three main themes emerged: treatment barriers, interventions implemented in treatment, and ongoing and necessary improvements in the field to enhance the mental health experiences of Black women. The findings suggest that therapists should work from a humanistic approach and incorporate interpersonal interventions to promote healing when working with Black women.

Marissa Hartson

Attachment-informed Approaches to OCD: Therapists' Experiences

OCD is a mental health disorder that often experiences a chronic course. Although current cognitive and behavioral therapies for OCD are evidence-based, those who struggle with the disorder rarely experience complete remission. Emerging research suggests a connection between attachment insecurity and the development of OCD, yet attachment-informed approaches to therapy are rarely included in OCD treatment. The present study explored the experiences of mental health professionals who integrated attachment-informed approaches into their treatment of clients with OCD. Three participants were interviewed about their clinical experiences. Four major themes emerged during thematic analysis, including clinical presentation, the biopsychosocial model, treatment, and the therapeutic relationship. Limitations of the study and opportunities for future research were also addressed. Implications for clinical practice included recommendations regarding attending to clients' feelings of shame, nurturing an adaptive therapeutic relationship, and practicing an integrative approach to treatment.

Sydney M. Herring-Alderete

Queering Counselor Education: Exploring Queer Counselors in Training Experiences

There is a dearth of research on the strengths of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people of color (LGBTQ PoC; Reyes et al., 2022). Furthermore, most of the existing research focuses on the pain and trauma of discrimination and oppression—inadvertently keeping participants in the *wounded subject position* (Brown, 1995). The wounded subject position

reduces LGBTQ PoC to their experiences of discrimination and oppression and may unintentionally promote further oppression by reinforcing existing power relations (Hudson & Romanelli, 2019). Consequently, it is imperative to promote a holistic research approach that investigates the impact of oppression and explores the experiences of resilience and power of LGBTQ PoC (Singh, 2017). There is limited research that explores queer counselors-in-training experiences in counseling programs with an emphasis on the integration of their professional and queer identities (Craig et al., 2017) when utilizing expressive art therapy methods. Expressive arts therapy provides an opportunity for people to reclaim their intrinsic capacity to express individual and collective human experiences using painting, poetry, music, and other art media (Corey, 2022). This study examined the effectiveness of utilizing expressive arts therapy to facilitate the exploration and processing of intersecting identities for queer counselors in training. Consistent themes among co-researchers included community, navigational strategies, the impact of expressive arts, systemic oppression and resistance, and identity development. Results confirm that expressive arts can be helpful in contextualizing queer counselors in training experience(s) when navigating their queerness in their training programs.

Kevlyn Holmes

Geek Therapy: A Potential Treatment for Identity Diffusion in Borderline Personality Disorder

This study explored how geek therapy, a newer branch of therapy that integrates a client's geek interests into therapeutic work via role-playing games, character analysis, metaphor, and more, can be used to help people with borderline personality disorder (BPD) construct a more stable sense of self. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three therapists who have experience using geek therapy with BPD clients, and subsequent transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: a) Cultural humility: The superpower of the geek therapist; b) Trauma: The conceptual origin story of BPD; and c) Geek therapy as a treatment for identity diffusion. These findings suggest that geek therapy has powerful ways of reaching geek-aligned BPD individuals via their geek cultural identity and geek interests and can be used to not only treat identity diffusion but also to heal the attachment wounds that underscore BPD's conceptualization.

Rolan Đắc-Thiện Huỳnh

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT): An Exploration of Clinical Applications in the Treatment of Queer Men Experiencing Body Dysmorphia

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is increasingly prevalent among men, particularly queer men, with rates now approaching those observed in women. This growing trend highlights the urgent need to address BDD, as it is associated with severe mental health consequences, including diminished self-esteem and heightened suicidality. The present qualitative study examines the clinical applications of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) for queer men experiencing BDD. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with licensed mental health clinicians who have experience treating this population. Thematic analysis revealed three key themes: the role of identity in the development and experience of BDD, barriers faced by queer men with BDD, and effective DBT interventions for this group. These findings emphasize the significant influence of identity in shaping internalized beliefs, behaviors, and emotional experiences. The study provides valuable insights for clinicians working with queer men struggling with BDD and identifies directions for future research to better address the unique needs of this population.

Clayton V. Johnson

Distress Is a Valid Emotional Response to Injustice: An Exploration of Clinical Experiences in Treating Adult Survivors of Childhood Emotional Maltreatment

Childhood Emotional Maltreatment (CEM) encompasses both emotional abuse and emotional neglect experienced during childhood and exists as the most underreported, understudied, and underrepresented form of childhood maltreatment, despite being the most prevalent and potentially the most damaging, with effects following survivors into adulthood. To help address the gap in research and treatment considerations for this population, the present study sought to explore mental health professionals' experiences and observations in working with adult survivors of CEM. The present study reviewed and analyzed the available literature on adult survivors of CEM. Four clinicians were then interviewed to collect data on their experiences working with this population and a thematic analysis was generated. This study provides nuanced clinical information on the effects of CEM and treatment approaches from clinicians working with this population that may illuminate practices less represented in the literature and suggest areas for future research and advocacy.

Sheky Keykhosrowpour

The Double-Edged Sword: Counselor Perspective of the Role of Religion in Domestic Violence and its Aftermath

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of religious faith on women's experiences of domestic violence. Previous research in the scholarly literature suggests a dual nature in this complex relationship, where religious faith can act as both a limiting and a protective factor. By using purposeful and snowball sampling methods, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with three mental health practitioners working at a domestic violence agency. In the phenomenological approach, the study focused on understanding the clinicians' perspectives on their clients' lived experiences of domestic violence and examining how religious faith may have played a role in either alleviating or exacerbating these experiences. Data analysis involved both open and axial coding techniques, which led to the identification of recurring themes and patterns of behavior among abused women in relation to their use of faith. The results revealed the complexity of religion in the context of relationship violence, echoing existing literature that highlights how religiosity can both prevent women from seeking help and perpetuate their involvement in abusive dynamics while also offering hope and support through pastoral counseling and faith communities.

Emma Lin

Finding Home: Exploring Acculturative Trauma Treatment for Second-Generation Asian Americans

As a child of immigrants in the United States, one lives in a liminal space between two often contrasting and conflicting cultures. Facing tremendous pressures to fit in and succeed, early life and family dynamics can leave these individuals without a clear sense of identity as well as feelings of inadequacy among other consequences. The present study is an exploration of how second-generation Asian American clients can navigate the healing process when faced with the fallout of traumatic early experiences. Three second-generation Asian American clinicians were interviewed about how they have supported their second-generation Asian American clients, including trauma treatment modalities such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, in healing from traumatic experiences that have resulted in Acculturative Family Distancing.

Three themes emerged from the interviews: common challenges of children of Asian immigrant parents, healing Acculturative Family Distancing, and other traits that may facilitate help-seeking and therapeutic process. Findings suggest that while culturally-appropriate and informed trauma treatment was effective for these clients, the therapeutic relationship was more frequently a major predictor of healing due to its ability to fulfill common unmet emotional needs of such clients. Implications for clinical practice including a discussion of the potential benefits of non-directive therapy, areas of future research, and limitations of the study were also included.

Tessa Logan

Supporting Queer Identity Development: An Exploration of Group Counselors' Clinical Experiences

Research demonstrates the mental health disparities within queer communities, showing higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and suicidality compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Meyer, 2013). Given the psychological vulnerabilities and social challenges faced by queer individuals, this study seeks to address a critical gap: how can group therapy serve as an effective intervention for supporting queer identity development? The researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians who currently facilitate groups with queer individuals. Participants provided insight into their experiences and the clinical implications of supporting queer identity development through group therapy. Through phenomenological data analysis, three key themes emerged: the importance of social support, factors that support growth in identity development, and establishing a foundation of safety in the group. The findings suggest that queer individuals are best supported in their identity journey through group therapy when a sense of safety is established, clients feel able to express themselves freely without judgment, experience representation within the group, and have the chance to connect and develop reciprocal relationships.

Maha Manswer

Therapists' Thoughts and Feelings Toward Cognitive Behavior Therapy Treatment for Adolescent Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

The purpose of the research study was to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) on adolescent attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) through the perceptions and experiences of counselors who counsel adolescents and use CBT interventions. Three semi-structured interviews with clinicians who have experience in working with adolescents with ADHD utilizing CBT interventions were conducted. The findings resulted in alignment with the existing literature, and six common themes emerged: ADHD diagnosis and symptoms observed, assessment process for ADHD, CBT interventions used with adolescent ADHD, limitations of CBT, contributors to disorders and disparities, and client acceptance. Although there is growing literature that supports the use of CBT with ADHD, this study concluded that more research is needed to assess the effectiveness of CBT with adolescents diagnosed with ADHD.

Evelyn M. Mares

Unpacking How One's Legal Status Affects Mental Health Among Latinx Undocumented College Students

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of clinicians' experiences and perceptions of working with Latinx undocumented college students and effective treatment approaches. Three mental health professionals were interviewed using a semi-structured process. The two major themes that emerged from the interviews were Latinx undocumented experiences and resiliency in Latinx culture, coupled with subthemes such as mental health barriers and family expectations. This population benefits from humanistic and person-centered treatment approaches that empower clients and recognize resiliency with this population. The results from this study were congruent with existing literature that Latinx undocumented immigrants' mental health was greatly affected by the current anti-immigrant political climate and the economic constraints this population faced.

Veronica Orosco Mayfield

Audacious Hope: Standing in the Gap Clinicians' Experiences of Facilitating Resilience Among Bicultural Young Adults

Given the transitional stage of bicultural young adults and their experiences of dual cultural conflict, they may be more vulnerable to mental health disparities, such as anxiety and depression. The present study explored clinicians' experiences facilitating resilience among bicultural young adults struggling to navigate dual cultures. Following a review of the existing literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three bicultural licensed mental health practitioners with expertise working with this population. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed two overarching themes: shaping bicultural identity conflict and integrating bicultural identities by facilitating resilience. Findings suggest that furthering resilience may support bicultural young adults with integrating their dual identities and promoting their mental health wellness.

Denisse Mireles

When Home Hurts: Clinical Insights into Childhood IPV Exposure

This study explored the impact of childhood exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) on attachment patterns, relational dynamics, and the intergenerational transmission of IPV. Following the review of the literature, three mental health professionals were interviewed, using a semi-structured approach. Three overarching themes emerged from the interviews: the impact of childhood IPV exposure, clinician challenges and client resilience, and clinical interventions. Findings revealed the importance of interventions, such as trauma-informed care, psychoeducation, and early intervention geared towards children and adolescents. Protective factors, including supportive relationships and resilience, were identified as crucial in mitigating the effects of IPV exposure. Recommended treatment approaches include culturally sensitive, trauma-focused interventions tailored to individual needs, alongside clinical skills designed to foster trust and establish a safe environment for clients.

Natalia Morales

Utilizing Child-Centered Play therapy to Treat Latinx Children with Complex Trauma

The present study aimed to explore therapists' experiences utilizing Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) with Latinx children with complex trauma. Three participants were interviewed for the study and asked questions about their experience using play therapy, setting up their playroom, working with complex trauma, and working with Latinx populations. Participants were recruited for this study based on their current experience utilizing play therapy with children and their title

as practicing clinicians in California. To explore the study's focus, the researcher also conducted a literature review to address the research on CCPT, complex trauma, and Latinx populations. The study used a qualitative analysis and found themes regarding the playroom set-up, CCPT techniques and concepts, measuring progress, play therapist qualities, collaboration with caregivers, culture and play, complex trauma, and play as communication. Findings indicated similarities across participants and current research but also indicated variability across therapists' subjective experiences with culture, sand tray, and art in the playroom. Additionally, the study assessed for limitations, implications, and areas for future research.

Lo Mosher-Whipple

What We Stay Alive For: An Exploration of Clinical Applications of Expressive Arts Therapy for Adolescents Who Struggle With Eating Disorders

The present study explores the use of expressive arts therapy (EXAT) in the treatment of eating disorders (ED) and disordered eating (DE). The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with EXAT clinicians who currently treat EDs and DE to provide narrative descriptions of their work and its efficacy. Several major themes emerged from the data including interpersonal connection, kinesthetic/somatic qualities of EXAT, and psychological safety. The results of the study support the existing literature that discusses the importance of a mind-body reintroduction, particularly with clients who suffer from EDs (Heiderscheit, 2015). The data also supports the gaps in current research surrounding EXAT due to its existential and experiential nature which makes it difficult to quantify compared to more cognitive and behavioral approaches. However, EXAT is a tool that can improve relapse prevention by uncovering and understanding the complexities of EDs and DE, as presented by the data in this study.

Beyzanur Ozdemir

Can't Pray the Depression Away: Counseling Muslim Immigrants in the US with Culturally and Spiritually Integrated Modalities

This study explored counselors' experiences working with Muslim immigrant populations in the United States and their views on integrating culture and spirituality into the work. The researcher conducted a qualitative research design, utilizing a semi-structured interview format with three participants. The researcher organized the data into three themes: presenting and other concerns, strengths and challenges, and effective treatment approaches. The findings suggest the importance of culturally sensitive methods and culturally competent therapists when working with this population. The findings also presented multiple ways to modify treatment for culture or spirituality due to the unique experiences and culture possessed by each individual. Some of these culturally adaptive methods involved collaboration with clients and faith leaders, and the use of language, group work, religious values, and familial connections. This study provides further insight into working with this marginalized population in a culturally competent manner.

Joe Sanchez

Dialectical Behavior Therapy and its Effects on Intimacy in Adult Children of Alcoholic

This study aims to understand the role of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and its effects on intimacy in Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACoAs). It is often believed that this population tends to have difficulties in their relationships related to coping strategies, emotional regulation, and attachment styles. When it comes to the treatment of these individuals, there is limited research

looking at the specific modality of DBT. Three practicing clinicians were interviewed to understand this connection better and had their responses transcribed and coded. Each participant interviewed actively used this modality in treatment and had experience working with the target population. Results from the interviews highlighted beneficial interventions and commonalities. Interventions included using mindful awareness and understanding the difficulty this population faces when trusting others. Results from this study may help provide future clinicians with a starting foundation when working with ACoAs and a starting point for areas of future research.

Hailey Sattler

The Myth of Man: Exploring Masculine Identity Development in Adolescent Boys through Feminist Theory

The deficits in research about and clinical service to boys and men require a paradigm shift in the counseling field. Societal expectations and messages of manhood significantly impact masculine identity formation. The present study explored how feminist theory can facilitate authentic identity development within adolescent boys. Through a review of the current relevant literature and interviews with three professionals who have experience counseling boys and men, the present study revealed themes related to deficits in clinical work with male clients, advantageous and counterproductive clinician features, intricacies in working with male clients as a female clinician, and beneficial theoretical approaches. The researcher utilized purposive sampling to approve the participants and a semi-structured interview protocol. These findings emphasized the need for expanded clinician education, enhanced mental health services for boys and men, and the potential advantageous outcomes of integrating feminist theory in work with male clients.

Clarke Schwartz

Sexuality Professionals' Lived Experiences Using Psychosexual Therapy with Couples in Long-Term Relationships Experiencing Deficits in Sexual Satisfaction

Previous research has shown that sexual satisfaction is a subjective measure, but one that plays an important role in a couples' long-term relational satisfaction. The following qualitative study seeks to explore the lived experiences of sexuality professionals who work with couples and use psychosexual therapy as a modality. The research also sought out to confirm if sexual satisfaction was possible in long term heterosexual relationships. Three participants were selected from various psycho-sexual backgrounds, to take place in one hour long semi-structured interviews. For data analysis the McLeod (2003) method was used. The interviews were then coded, and the following major themes were identified: (a) holistic approach, (b) subjective sexological worldview, (c) sexual satisfaction, and (d) barriers to sexual satisfaction. For the most part, the semi-structured interviews confirmed what was found in the literature review. There were few discrepancies, including the importance placed on orgasm in overall sexual satisfaction. In conclusion, sexual satisfaction is found to be a subjective measure, quality is more important than quantity, and long-term sexual satisfaction is possible under the right conditions listed in this research project.

Rebecca Steen

Breaking the Silence: Trauma-Informed Mental Health Care for Women with Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a chronic illness affecting 1 in 10 individuals with a uterus (Facchin et al., 2018), leading to profound physical, psychological, and systemic challenges. Despite increasing recognition of its psychological impact, limited research has examined how mental health

professionals provide trauma-informed care to this population. This qualitative study explored the therapeutic approaches of five therapists who work with women with endometriosis, focusing on the psychological toll of medical trauma, systemic barriers, and identity shifts. Clients often enter therapy with anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth, frequently stemming from medical gaslighting and dismissal. These experiences contribute to PTSD-like symptoms, including hypervigilance and avoidance. Therapists employ trauma-informed practices, such as somatic interventions and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), to address emotional dysregulation and restore agency. Systemic barriers, including inadequate insurance and financial strain, exacerbate distress, prompting therapists to advocate for and connect clients to essential resources. Additionally, identity disruptions rooted in internalized ableism and diminished self-esteem underscore the need for values-driven, anti-ableist therapeutic practices. This study emphasizes the critical role of validation, self-advocacy, and systemic reform in enhancing the quality of life for women with endometriosis. It calls for expanded research on diverse populations and long-term therapeutic outcomes to inform care strategies for underserved individuals. By adopting trauma-informed and inclusive approaches, mental health professionals can address the multifaceted challenges of endometriosis and foster resilience in their clients.

Alexandria Stewart

Aging Gracefully: Healers Help the Golden Years Sparkle with Spiritually Integrated Counseling

Older adults are a growing population that represents a growing need for culturally competent mental health clinicians. The present study explored spiritually integrated counseling for older adults, focusing on spirituality's role in alleviating depression, anxiety, loneliness, and grief. Through thematic analysis of five interviews with clinicians specializing in spiritually integrated counseling and counseling older adults, three significant themes emerged: older adults' unique strengths that are adaptive therapeutically, spirituality as a coping mechanism, and spiritually integrated counseling practices. The findings suggest that spirituality promotes emotional healing, meaning-making, and social connection. The findings also emphasize the importance of cultural humility and therapists' spiritual development in effective spiritually integrated practice. The study concludes that spiritually integrated counseling can optimize older adults' health through holistic, ethically sound practices and recommends further research on long-term impacts and standardized spiritual interventions.

Shea Williams

Dungeons & Dragons & Safe Spaces: An Exploration Tabletop Role-Playing Games and Related Interventions in Therapy and the Benefits of Their use with LGBTQ+ Clients

This study explores how clinicians utilize tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGS) and related interventions in their clinical work, and with LGBTQ+ clients in particular. Four clinical therapists were interviewed using a semi-structured format. Three major themes emerged from the interviews, including the specific types of TTRPG-related interventions used, the perceived benefits of incorporating TTRPGs into therapy, and the specific benefits of utilizing TTRPGs when working with LGBTQ+ clients. The study's results corroborate existing literature that examines the therapeutic benefits of TTRPG-based interventions, and which explores the ways that LGBTQ+ people find therapeutic value in TTRPGs in non-clinical settings. The findings also expand upon the existing literature by exploring the interventions that clinicians have used with the LGBTQ+ population and the benefits they have observed as a result.

Jonathan Chung Yoo

Lights, Camera, ACT-ion: Counseling East Asian American College Students Presenting with Social Anxiety Using Action-Oriented Modalities

This qualitative study reports findings and themes from semi-structured interviews of three university counseling center therapists who are experienced in treatment of social anxiety among East Asian American college students. Pressure of familial expectations to achieve, acculturation to a new environment, and racialized violence against East Asian Americans emerged as salient themes in factors contributing to social anxiety in this population. Mindfulness, practical tools, and a focus on the present emerged as effective elements of action-oriented modalities.

Additionally, the therapists emphasized the importance of psychoeducation and incorporating other modalities such as psychodynamic and Gestalt therapy. Recommendations for practice include community-based, prevention-oriented psychoeducation and applying an intersectional lens to understanding the complexities of factors contributing to social anxiety in East Asian American college students. The understanding gained from the experiential knowledge of the therapists can contribute to better clinical outcomes for a population and clinical issue in need of more research.