

Shelby L. Ammann

Sharp Objects: Exploring Therapists' Experiences Using Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy in Treating Adolescents who Self-harm.

The purpose of the present study was to explore therapists' experience using EMDR therapy with adolescents who engage in nonsuicidal self-injurious behavior (NSSI) and experienced trauma from childhood abuse by their primary caregiver. As NSSI continues to rise in the United States, adolescents need effective treatment from mental health professionals for symptoms and behaviors originating from relational abuse. The exploratory study assessed the aptitude of EMDR therapy as a beneficial intervention for NSSI. Five participants with backgrounds in EMDR therapy and experience working with adolescents who self-harm was selected via purposeful and snowball sampling and interviewed in a semi-structured format. Results were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, revealing nine overarching themes, including the therapeutic relationship, shame and secrecy, the presence of trauma, the importance of prioritizing safety, special considerations when working with adolescents, fundamental EMDR therapy phases for adolescents who self-harm, utilizing attachment figures, self-harm as an addiction, and cultural and intersectional identities considerations. Results suggested that therapists can assist clients who self-harm with EMDR therapy. Clinical implications, areas of future research, and limitations of the study are addressed.

Diana Arsharuni

Invisible Minority: Exploring the Mental Health of Southwest Asian/North African (SWANA) Individuals Living in the United States

Southwest Asian/North African (SWANA) Americans are a historically understudied minority group in the United States. SWANA individuals are required to identify themselves as White, disregarding significant aspects of their identity. This qualitative study explores SWANA Americans' mental health and clinical implications. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with SWANA mental health professionals who had experience working with this population. Five emergent themes surfaced from the data, including (1) unique challenges of identity, (2) challenges associated with acculturation, (3) experiences of discrimination and oppression, (4) barriers to treatment, and (5) effective treatment modalities. Results suggest various theoretical approaches and integration of religious or spiritual practices to effectively work with the SWANA population. Further research is needed on this underrepresented population to reduce the gap in the disparities currently available in the literature and provide appropriate mental health services to this multilayered population.

Janice S. Bachmann

Offspring of Parents with Serious Mental Illness: Impacts, Implications, and Interventions

Children who live with parents struggling with severe mental illness (SMI) face distinct emotional vulnerabilities and challenges. The present qualitative research study explores the impacts and implications of parental SMI on children and adolescents through the observations of mental health clinicians who serve that population. Following a review of the existing literature, interviews were conducted with three licensed marriage and family therapists who work with children of parents with SMI to obtain their perceptions and experiences. Three predominant themes emerged from the interviews: the impacts of parental SMI on a child's inner world, how it affects their external and family relationships and dynamics, and finally, treatment considerations for this population. The emergent themes are compared and contextualized with

findings from existing literature, revealing specific risk factors among the members of this population, treatment considerations as well as areas for potential further study.

Emily A. D. Bell

Using a Narrative Approach to Explore the Consequences of Sports Media's Objectification of Female Athletes in the U.S.

Little research has been conducted on the experiences of mental health professionals who counsel female athletes using narrative constructs and tools. The primary researcher conducted four 60-minute semi-structured virtual interviews with four licensed mental health professionals to investigate clinical concerns associated with sports media's objectification of female athletes. The interview transcripts were analyzed by a data analysis team comprised of the primary researcher and her peer to reveal five emerging themes. These themes were sports media's tools to perpetuate gender inequality, the impact of sports participation, reasons for seeking mental health services, the therapeutic experience, and evaluating the usefulness of using narrative therapy with female athletes. Based on the participants' experiences, narrative therapy appears suitable for counseling female athletes because it addresses problematic dominant discourses within sports media while promoting healing and a sense of agency. These research findings may provide mental health professionals, coaches, and athletes with insight and knowledge for navigating some of the unique problems female athletes encounter.

Abigila Bonar

Exploring Therapists' Use of Therapist Self-Disclosure with Teenage Clients

Therapist self-disclosure (TSD) is a therapeutic phenomenon that has been widely researched among adult client but rarely with teenage clients. To gain more insight on the utilization of TSD with teenagers, five mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their experiences employing TSD with their teenage clients. Semi-structured interviews were used, and interview questions focused on when participants might apply TSD, the therapeutic purposes they may be aiming to achieve, successful and unsuccessful executions of TSD, and the decision making process for determining the appropriateness of TSD. Seven major themes emerged from the interviews: (a) distinguishing factors for teenagers, (b) therapeutic goals, (c) client reactions to TSD, (d) therapists' response to unsuccessful TSD, (e) precautions, (f) bounded-TSD, and (g) the lived experience. Clinical implications suggest that teenagers may require TSD more than other populations, and there are special considerations to be made when applying this therapeutic intervention with teenage clients.

Melina Carrillo

Breaking Generational Cycles: Clinicians' Experiences with Latinx Female Mental Health

This study explored the experiences of clinicians working with Latinx females trying to break generational cycles of mental health struggles in their families. Four Latinx female clinicians were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Three themes emerged from the interviews: presentation of Latinx female mental health throughout generations, the role of culture in lived experiences, and treatment considerations for working with Latinx female clients. The results from the interviews suggest that the Latinx population continues to face disparities in both access to and quality of treatment. The findings also expanded on the hope that through having

culturally competent clinicians providing appropriate treatment to the Latinx population, the stigma of mental health will lessen for future generations.

Frances Cocksedge

Examining the Use of Art Therapy with Adolescents

Struggling adolescents often resist traditional talk therapy. As a result, some clinicians employ non-traditional methods of therapy with this vulnerable population to help engage them in the process. The present study explores the non-traditional method of art therapy as a treatment for adolescent clients. Four licensed mental health clinicians were selected to participate based on their extensive experience practicing adolescent art therapy and interviewed in a semi-structured format to extrapolate their professional and personal experiences with this topic. Results were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which yielded the following eight major themes: (a) adolescent development, (b) accessing the client's inner world, (c) the art process, (d) the therapeutic relationship, (e) choosing art materials, (f) tangible representation, (g) art anxiety, and (h) cultural considerations. The results of this study support the pre-existing literature on art therapy's unique ability to facilitate self-expression, identity development, and self-awareness in adolescent clients. It expanded on previous research by delineating the nuances of various art materials and specifying appropriate cultural adaptations for art therapy. The results provided new insight on art's absence in the American educational system, why this deficiency can negatively impact teenagers, and how art therapy can be used to help.

Christiano Gannuscio

Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to Treat Anxiety in Individuals with Insecure Attachment

The connection between anxiety disorders and insecure attachment styles has been explored in numerous studies since the first Bowlby (1969) text detailing attachment styles. Despite this progress, there still exists a dearth of information regarding the use of mindfulness and acceptance approaches to treat anxiety in clients with insecure attachment styles. This qualitative study examines the perspectives of four mental health clinicians who use acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) with clients who have insecure attachment styles and suffer from anxiety disorders. Nine themes represent the participants' perspectives: (a) characteristics of attachment styles, (b) reconciling the past, (c) the therapeutic relationship as a healing instrument, (d) avoidance, (e) fostering present-moment introspection, (f) a flexible and tailored approach, (g) utilizing metaphor, (h) values-based behavioral changes, and (i) cultural considerations. Clinical implications and areas for future research are discussed.

Kimberly Grayson

Examining Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Adolescents Experiencing Parental Divorce

Parental divorce is considered an adverse childhood experience or potentially traumatic event for many adolescents. This qualitative study explores trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) with adolescents experiencing parental divorce. Data analysis consisted of coding participants' responses and identifying emerging concepts, resulting in the establishment of seven overarching themes: (1) the therapeutic relationship, (2) impact of divorce, (3) caught in the fight, (4) skill-building, (5) psychoeducation, (6) parental involvement, and (7) cultural and

gender considerations. Results suggest that TF-CBT is an effective trauma treatment for adolescents coping with parental divorce. Furthermore, results from this study could impact the way mental health clinicians use TF-CBT interventions to help foster post-traumatic growth when working with adolescents of divorce. Clinical implications, areas of future research, and study limitations are addressed.

Mikaela Grimm

Starving Our Inner Child: Therapists' Perspective of Inner Child Work to Mitigate Eating Disorder Behaviors in Survivors of Childhood Abuse

Estimates suggest that 1.6 million individuals in the United States currently struggle with an eating disorder. Eating disorders are among one of the deadliest mental health conditions and remain largely misunderstood. Research suggests that eating disorders often stem from childhood abuse and early exposure to trauma. While more evidence-based eating disorder treatments are emerging, no evidence-based eating disorder treatment currently exists that targets women who struggle with an eating disorder and identify as a survivor of childhood abuse. The present study interviewed three clinicians who specialize in eating disorders and inner child work to better understand the potential efficacy of inner child work as an intervention to treat women who struggle with an eating disorder and identify as a survivor of childhood abuse. Data was coded and analyzed to identify themes. Emerging themes provide a framework for clinicians that work with this specialized population. Findings highlight the promising efficacy of inner child work to treat female survivors of childhood abuse who struggle with an eating disorder.

Sierra R. Hegle

Exploring How Counselors Foster Resilience with Adult Children of Problem-Drinkers

The consequences of growing up with a problem-drinking parent are lifelong and far-reaching. The following qualitative study explored how counselors conceptualize the experiences of adult children of problem-drinkers (ACOPD) and foster resilience through the therapeutic relationship. Three licensed clinicians participated in a semi-structured qualitative interview regarding their experiences working with ACOPDs. The identified themes included denial, relationship to alcohol, depending on others, anxious attachment, protective factors, ACOPD outcomes, and treatment interventions. The results suggested that many ACOPDs are unaware of how their experiences of growing up with a problem-drinking parent have affected them when they first enter therapy. However, common presenting concerns include relationship dissatisfaction, anxiety, hypervigilance, shame, and substance abuse. Clinicians utilize an integration of techniques that best suit the client, with a primary focus on establishing a secure therapeutic relationship first and foremost, normalizing the ACOPD experience, celebrating the ACOPD's strengths, and encouraging boundary setting. Ultimately, most counselors encounter COPDs in their practice. Thus, this study aids in understanding the complex COPD experience and how counselors can foster resilience through the therapeutic relationship.

Jordan Shayne Leverette Hernandez

Decolonizing Therapy Through Humor: An Analysis of the Efficacy of Humor as a Therapeutic Intervention with Black Americans

The present study explores three mental health clinicians' experiences utilizing humor with adult members of the Black community. Qualitative data was gathered, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to better understand effectiveness of humor as a therapeutic intervention with

Black adults. Six primary themes emerged from the data: (a) barriers to services, (b) client use of humor, (c) therapeutic goals, (d) humor modalities, (e) therapist qualities, and (f) humor use considerations. Findings suggest that humor may be a helpful therapeutic intervention to increase the accessibility of effective therapeutic services for Black adults. Furthermore, results from this study could assist in the decolonization of mental health service

Kristiana Guzman

Social Media's Influence on the Development of Norms Within First-generation College Students

The present study was conducted to better understand how first-generation college students acclimate to their surroundings on a college campus. The study also significantly addressed social media's role in how first-generation college students obtain resources or a sense of community. A sample of four mental health professionals were interviewed in this study using a semi-structured, qualitative interview format. Participants were asked about their experience working with first-generation college students in a therapeutic setting and their personal views on how social media has shaped some of the population's negative or positive experiences. To analyze the data, the researcher recruited a fellow graduate student in the counseling program to help code data and find overlapping themes in the interview transcripts. Some of the conclusions drawn from the data were barriers, familial responsibilities, pressure, cultural clash, and support. Each of these are critical components that affect first-generation college students in some capacity.

Jacqueline Jacobo

Exploring the Benefits of Animal-Assisted Therapy for Clients with Complex Trauma and CPTSD

The study goal was to garner a deeper understanding of the use of animal assisted therapy (AAT) and animal assisted techniques on clients presenting with complex trauma (CT) and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). The qualitative research study relied on the data from three mental health clinician participants who either have clinical experience using AAT and/or working with client's complex trauma. The three participants identified as women, one clinician is a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) who currently certified in EMDR therapy and works from a trauma recovery modality, clinician two is also a LMFT who is trauma informed and incorporates animal assisted techniques into her current private practice, and clinician three is a master's level social worker who currently internships as a MFT trainee at a AAT facility in Colorado. Each participant noted the relevance of having experience with either AAT and/or complex trauma. Each participant offered their own perspectives and clinical experience on the benefits and barriers to AAT, the effects of complex trauma during treatment and concerns towards the advocacy for the welfare of animals in the healing field.

Marcus Jasmin

Birds Fly, Children Play: The Use of Play Therapy with African American Youth Exposed to Trauma

This qualitative research examined the experience of three former or current play therapists who have provided extensive play therapy for African American children that have been exposed to trauma. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of treating this underserved demographic and the counselors' experience in treating these children. These participants were found via social media and using the Association for Play Therapists directory online. A semi-

structured interview was used to conduct the investigation into the successes and methods these participants used within their treatments. Participants reported the importance of understanding the dynamics within African American households, being intentional about their activities and toys, and involving the parents within the therapeutic process. The results of this study also aligned with the research that showed play therapy to be culturally competent and successful when working with African American children as it provided a strong relational emphasis and unconditional positive regard to express one's feelings. Future research could observe play therapy's effectiveness with adolescents and the use of video games and other pieces of modern technology in a play therapy framework.

Sunny Jeon

Exploring Therapists Fostering Posttraumatic Growth in Female Survivors of Interpersonal Violence

This qualitative research explored the experiences of mental health professionals who have or are currently working with women survivors of interpersonal violence (IPV). Participants reported the continuity of safety and care, deconstructing the healing process, the therapeutic alliance, challenges in rebuilding the social support, and treatment approaches in working with women survivors of IPV. The results aligned with existing research that indicated the multifaceted approach in navigating clients towards posttraumatic growth. Future research could explore cultural factors in treatment approaches given that existing literature including this study has investigated primarily with Caucasian participants. Additionally, another area of future research includes integrating intersectionality and its role in the mental health professional's approach to counseling.

Leah E. Kinman

"I just want to be a good mom": Exploring the Need for Integrative Services in Treatment for Mothers with Substance Use Disorder and Incarceration Histories

Formerly incarcerated parenting women with substance use disorder are individuals whose identities intersect on many levels. They are a uniquely vulnerable and heavily stigmatized population who face a multitude of barriers when seeking treatment. While there have been prior studies focused on how to therapeutically treat each of these populations separately, there seems to be very little research on how to treat these individuals. Research shows that relationships, especially with family and children, play an important role in the treatment, and recovery of this population. Integrative services focus on the clinical treatment, support, and services that address the women's substance use and mental health; while also providing additional services such as childcare, transportation, parenting education, life skill courses, and employment readiness. Thus, the present qualitative study explores common themes that emerge when working with this population. Semi-structured interviews with three therapists who provided services in a residential inpatient setting structured around the women and their children were analyzed. Eight superordinate themes emerged, including: (1) a history of trauma, (2) stigma, (3) consequences of stigma, (d) the presence of comorbidity, (e) gender expectations, (f) barriers to recovery, (g) the need for a strengths-based treatment approach, and (h) the importance of integrative services. The current findings support the existing literature, drawing attention to the need for integrative services, while highlighting the clinical implications and exploring areas for possible future research.

Jeremy J. Larson

The Counselor Perspective: Identifying and Treating Law Enforcement Mental Health Problems During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Given law enforcement's unique career experiences of roller coaster-like stress, culture, and stigma over the use of mental health treatment, they may be more vulnerable to mental health concerns during the Covid-19 pandemic. The present study explored how clinicians identify and treat law enforcement mental health problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. Three mental health psychologists were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Four major themes emerged from these interviews, mental health concerns for law enforcement in life and in therapy, law enforcement challenges during Covid-19, law enforcement benefits during Covid-19, and treatment challenges and the mental health professional's role in positive outcomes for law enforcement during the Covid-19 pandemic. The outcome of this study supports current literature which discusses the exacerbated challenges law enforcement has dealt with during the Covid-19 pandemic. These findings also expand upon the current research and may assist treatment approaches for this population moving forward.

Henry Lepe

Exploring Therapist's Experiences Addressing Minority Stress and Relational Well-being with Gay Couples

The present study explores the impact of minority stress on the couples' well-being and internalization of the stigma, how counselors address minority stress in the room with gay male couples and integrating affirmative care into the work with gay couples. Four mental health professionals with experience working with gay male couples were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. With the assistance of another researcher, the primary researcher employed a qualitative thematic analysis to examine the four mental health professionals' narratives collected. Six significant themes emerged from the transcripts analyzed: the role of attachment in gay couples' relational connection, defining the relationship: monogamy and nonmonogamy relationships among gay couples', sources of minority stressors effect on the couple's relational well-being, the role of the affirming therapist, having a level of understanding and awareness when working with gay couples, and treatment approaches. Findings from the present study suggest that sources of minority stressors may impact couples' well-being, sense of self, relational attunement, the importance of providing affirmative and competent treatment, and mental health professionals demonstrating affirmation in their professional practice and personhood.

Lauren MacKinnon

A Feministic Approach on Young Women Using the Role of Sexual Exploration in Empowering their Positive Self-Concepts

The present study conducted an understanding of how young women use the role of sexual exploration and empower one's sexual agency to create a more positive self-concept. The study also significantly addressed how mental health practitioners work to use a feminist approach to help empower young women to reconnect to their bodies in a positive way while also uncovering the impact of gender roles, culture, psychological factors, and the development of one's sexual identity. A sample consisting of four mental health professionals was interviewed in this study. A semi-structured, qualitative interview format was used. Participants were asked about their training, certificates, and experience working with young women and exploring their sexual

identity or exploring sexuality. The researcher recruited a fellow counseling graduate student to help code data and find overlapping themes in the analysis process of four transcripts. Some of the conclusions drawn from the data were external and internal messaging, sexual risks/trauma, connecting to one's sexual voice, and creating healing practices. Each of these critical components helps researchers understand the multidimensional factors of sexuality and the importance of helping young women be empowered and positively exploring their sexual identity.

Jennifer Gadea Madrigal

Hoarding Disorder: From a Western Perspective Through a Cultural Lens

This study explored the experiences of four clinicians treating Latinx individuals with hoarding disorder. Since the inclusion of hoarding disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders fifth edition (DSM-5), there has been increasing research exploring the cognitions, challenges, comorbidities, risk factors and treatment approach. Unfortunately, most of the research about hoarding disorder pertains to Caucasian individuals in western society. The exploration culminated in four emerging themes: (1) characteristics of Latinx with hoarding; (2) The treatment approach; (3) Latinx cultural values; and (4) comorbidities with hoarding disorder. Consistent with research, many of the characteristics of hoarding disorder present similarly with some variations for Latinx clients. Findings suggested a cognitive based approach with culturally sensitive strategies, and the inclusion of family. Future research may focus on the causes of hoarding disorder, and the role of cultural values with Latinx who hoard.

Genesis Montealegre

Exploring the Impact of Social Media on Body Image in Young Latinas

This present study explores the ways in which social media impacts and influences young Latina women's body image and self-perception. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyze qualitative data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with three clinicians with experience treating young Latina women in the U.S. Overarching themes that arose from these interviews included (1) representation in the media, (2) mixed messaging, (3) the role of the family, (4) relationship to the body, (5) the role of the therapist, and (6) counselor considerations. Findings suggest that the impact of social media in Latina women may be mitigated through therapeutic interventions focused on boundary setting, self-awareness, and exploration of cultural identity and raising client's choice around their body. The present study supported previous literature highlighting the importance of cultural understanding and competence when working with Latinx individuals. As a result of an analysis of the data, areas of future research are introduced, and clinical implications are made to further the discussion on how clinicians can best meet the needs of this population in the Latinx community.

Danielle Navaroli

Non-religious African American Women and Coping

The religiously unaffiliated population is increasing in the United States, but little-known research has focused specifically on non-religious African American women (AAW) and their coping methods. This study examines non-religious AAW and how messages they receive from their mothers and society influence their coping strategies. The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians in this qualitative study. The participants shared their professional and personal experiences resulting in six overarching themes: (a) pitfalls of the SBW schema, (b) vulnerability, (c) reasons for seeking treatment, (d) therapeutic alliance, (e) coping, and (f) useful modalities. The results showed some differences in how religious and non-religious cope and confirmed the existing literature regarding the usefulness of narrative therapy when working with AAW. The findings contribute to a better understanding of non-religious AAW, how they cope, and the effectiveness of narrative therapy in the treatment of AAW.

Nat Newton

To Sleep, Perchance to Dream: Psychoanalytic Treatments of Insomnia

One in four women in the United States suffers from chronic insomnia (Office of Women's Health, 2018). The gold standard treatment for chronic sleeplessness is currently cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I); however, for some, CBT-I fails. What might interfere with treatment for the seemingly natural process of sleep? This study examined how psychoanalysts approached insomnia as an unconscious process in the context of systemic oppression. Three psychoanalysts of color were interviewed about their in-depth treatments of women and men of minority status with insomnia. Findings supported literature on psychoanalytic conceptualizations of insomnia in relation to attachment injuries, as well as added nuance on intersectionality and the integration of psychoanalysis with other techniques. Clinical implications included the usefulness of a psychoanalytic sensibility when addressing idiosyncratic manifestations of insomnia, attachment wounds, and complex defenses. Of note, being racially *other enough* was key for clinicians who treated minority patients, rendering positive outcomes.

Angela Mộng Nguyễn

“Can You Give Yourself a Break?”: Exploring how Therapists Implement Self-Compassion with Asian Americans

Despite being one of the most rapidly growing racial and ethnic groups in the states, Asian Americans continue to underutilize mental health services. This population can experience a range of life stressors from acculturative stress to stigma about mental health; therefore, they may benefit from utilizing therapy. In the following qualitative study, three mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their knowledge and utilization of self-compassion with Asian Americans. Using a semi-structure interview methodology, the researcher extracted information regarding this population. Five major themes emerged through the data: a) ways to facilitate self-compassion in therapy, b) differences in values, c) counselor considerations, d) strengthening self-awareness, e) strengths-based approach. Within these themes 2 minor themes were identified to further understand the therapists' experiences. The study's results may offer insight to mental health professionals in their clinical experiences to provide self-compassion techniques to Asian Americans who navigate their lives with stressors.

Sarah Ann Nguyen

Exploring How Therapists Address Erasure Experienced by Non-Conforming Gender Communities

The present study explores how the therapist utilizes their role to address erasure experienced by non-conforming gender communities. Semi-structured interviews with three participants working with non-binary, gender non-conforming, and transgender clients provided descriptive narratives of their professional and personal experiences revealing three overarching themes: erasure, advocacy, and therapeutic approaches and techniques. The results of this study supported the existing literature that discusses the impacts of erasure among non-conforming gender communities.

Tiana R. Nieto-Davidson

The Parlaying of Identities: Mental Health Implications of the Multiracial Experience

Multiracial identity is an area that remains underrepresented in the research. A qualitative study using a semi-structured interview protocol was conducted to examine the mental health implications of multiracial identity development processes. Three mental health clinicians were interviewed about their experiences working with multiracial clients in therapeutic settings. Interviews were conducted via telecommunication, transcribed, and coded using open and axial codes. A thematic analysis method was utilized to identify common themes. Five themes emerged from the participant interviews including (a) societal expectations and norms, (b) multilayered factors that influence identity development, (c) multiracial versus monoracial differences in identity development (d) the ambivalence and choosing phenomenon, and (e) strengths of the multiracial individual. Clinical implications, limitations of the study, and areas for future research are also discussed

Jacqueline Olazaba

Exploring How Counselors Support Career Development in Justice-Involved Clients

The criminal justice system in the United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. Most of those incarcerated are people of color who often have trouble obtaining work and sustaining their financial means after being released, contributing to recidivism. This study explores how counselors support career development of justice-involved clients. This exploratory qualitative study investigated the experiences of four mental health professionals with career counseling justice-involved clients. In-depth interviews and collaboratory analysis procedures were used. A thematic analysis was used to derive a set of final categories. These categories include (a) career services best practices, (b) therapist competency, (c) common client challenges, and (d) eclectic counseling approach. Participants described experiences of using career exploration, skill-building, and eclectic counseling approaches, including strength-based therapy and person-centered therapy. Criminal record restrictions, inequities, injustices, and disadvantages were identified as central phenomena for participants.

Danielle N. Olavarrieta

These Pieces Don't Fit: A Study of Multiracial Identity Integration Facilitated through an Internal Family Systems Approach

The present study examines whether the Internal Family Systems approach can facilitate healthy identity development among the multiheritage population. The researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with mental health clinicians who have experience using the Internal Family Systems approach while working with multiheritage clientele. The outcomes of the interviews provided descriptive narratives about their professional experiences revealing three overarching themes: developing healthy interracial homes, insight into the multiracial experience, and treatment outcomes following the Internal Family Systems approach. These findings suggest that Internal Family Systems may be a culturally accessible approach and should be explored in more detail in future research.

Rosalinda Rodriguez

The Counselor Perspective: Treating the Manifestations of Parentification Throughout the Course of Life

Parentification may not always end in youth but instead can follow an individual into adulthood. As a result, the present study explores the manifestation of parentification throughout an individual's life, particularly their experiences within a romantic relationship. Upon reviewing the existing literature, three mental health professionals were interviewed regarding their perspectives and experiences in working with the parentified population using a semi-structured interview format. After a thorough analysis of the code set, three overarching themes were identified: manifestations of parentification throughout the years, the presentation of parentification in Latinx families, and theoretical orientations and clinical approaches. Suggested treatment included psychodynamic therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, and family systems therapy.

Brandon Schmidt

Questioning the Spotlight: An Inquiry into the Influence of Theater on Contemporary Psychotherapy Practices with Men

Men and boys experience their identities intersectionally, and it may be more accurate to speak of multiple masculinities than a singular normative referent. Men and boys who adhere rigidly to traditional masculinity experience numerous negative physical and mental health outcomes and are often resistant to pursuing mental health services, possibly because they feel stigmatized by clinicians utilizing traditional talk therapy. The present study reviewed the use of theater-inspired interventions with men with a focus on finding gender sensitive treatment options. Three practicing clinicians who worked with men using theater-inspired interventions were selected to interview and a semi-structured, qualitative interview format was used. The interview expanded on the questions developed of this study. The participants were asked about their experience working with men and boys utilizing theater-inspired interventions. The researcher transcribed the interviews and conducted the data analysis in a team format, drawing upon the assistance of another advanced graduate student in counseling. The researcher interpreted the data collected while drawing from the research gathered in the review of literature on the topic.

Bailey Smith

“Real is Safe”: Counseling Latinx Transgender Immigrants Through the Lens of Relational-Cultural Theory

The purpose of this research was to examine the current mental health concerns and issues for transgender individuals, especially those who are part of the Latinx community and have immigrated to the United States, using the perspective of relational-cultural theory to explore its effectiveness as a potential intervention with this marginalized population. Four therapists with relevant experience were included in this study, which used semi-structured interviews to conduct qualitative research. Interview transcripts were coded for themes and sub-themes by a team of researchers in collaboration. Results included themes of trauma, effective therapeutic approaches, direct client advocacy, and community advocacy, along with several sub-themes that emerged. Data from this qualitative study indicate the use of relational-cultural theory concepts and approaches are effective with transgender clients, although the theory is not explicitly identified by therapists in the field. Future research could include exploring trauma experienced by transgender and Latinx immigrants, effective approaches for substance abuse treatment for this community, and current gaps in training regarding transgender issues for mental health professionals, medical practitioners, legal professionals, and community members.

Tericia Thompson

Displaced: Counseling Youth Experiencing Homelessness

The present study explores the experiences and approaches of mental health professionals that work with youth experiencing homelessness (YEH). Four mental health professionals with extensive experience working with displaced youth were recruited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Qualitative data was gathered and analyzed for common themes. Six themes were identified, the effect of agencies, oppression and discrimination, trauma and past experiences, trauma-informed care: safety and harm reduction, approaches, and considerations for providers. Findings suggest that there is a lack of resources provided to both YEH and professionals that work with the population. Resources are an important aspect as the client's hierarchy of needs is influential in the counseling process. Findings from the present study indicate that trauma is not only a common experience among the youth, but that trauma may act as another barrier to accessing services. Trauma-informed care and humanistic approaches were recommended by the professionals and considered to be best practices for working with YEH.

Shannon Tovar*The Impact of Social Media on Adolescents*

As the presence of social media continues to grow exponentially, there are concerns about adolescents' substantial usage of these platforms and the many implications that may hinder mental health and overall well-being. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the impact of social media on adolescent lives through the observations and experiences of counselors who work with this population. Three clinicians were interviewed about their experiences with adolescents' social media usage using a semi-structured approach. The three overarching themes that arose from these interviews included outlining social media addiction, the impact it has, and the counselor process of treating those that come to therapy with symptoms associated to social media use. The results from this study revealed the significance of acknowledging social media usage and practicing a balanced lifestyle rather than abstinence from these platforms. The findings from the study provided additional insight into the existing literature and the lack of information on this topic.

Rebecca White*The Effects of Postpartum Depression on Mother-Infant Attachment*

The present study explores the effects of postpartum depression on mother-infant attachment. Through purposeful and snowball sampling, the researcher conducted three semi-structured interviews with licensed mental health professionals working directly with women experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. This qualitative study revealed the clinical and personal experiences of women who feel detached from themselves as well as their child. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the interview data in which several themes were identified: symptoms of postpartum depression, risk factors for postpartum depression and impaired bonding, and clinical strategies for treating depressed mothers and their children. The results of this study expand upon existing literature by providing real-life perspectives from clinicians' lived experience. Specifically, these findings address unique insight to clinical challenges such as barriers to treatment and techniques used to promote healthy attachment.

Juanita Wilson*Benefit or Burden: The Role of Family Obligation on Latinx Youth*

Cultural expectations and social inequities often create the necessity for Latinx children to assume the role of family helper. The present study explores the impact on youth that may be obligated to perform household duties, provide emotional caregiving, or expected to follow cultural gender norms. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with three clinicians with experience treating Latinx youth. Seven themes emerged from the interviews: (1) the influence of gender, (2) parenting styles, (3) communication patterns, (4) mental health and psychosocial impact, (5) systemic therapeutic approach, (6) psychoeducation, and (7) culturally adaptive practices. Results from the present study suggest differences in cultural values surrounding family obligations may create parent-adolescent conflict and adverse outcomes for youth. Suggested treatment includes a family systems approach alongside psychoeducational conversations to help destigmatize therapy and diffuse generational tensions and clinicians acting as family intermediaries to help facilitate conflict resolution and promote communication.

Candace Wai Meng Wong

Game On: The Benefits of Utilizing Video Games as Treatment in Therapy

Video games continue to become more intricate in their designs, gameplay, and ways they meet peoples' needs. Given its rise in popularity as a hobby, perhaps something could be said about its potential usefulness in the world of mental health. With the value of video games in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore the benefits of utilizing video games with clients in a therapeutic setting. Five clinicians were interviewed about their experience using video games as an approach to treating their clients. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, three major themes with nine subthemes emerged from the data: (1) clinician's process of approaching video games, (2) strengths of video games, and (3) treatment processes involving video games. The results from this study revealed insights into how the mental health field and its clinicians can benefit from utilizing video games with their clients as part of their therapeutic process.

Mariko Wood

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Females and Implications for Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment

Since the implementation of Women's Suffrage with the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, Women have made leaps and bounds in the pursuit of political, professional, and social equality. Despite the many improvements of the last 102 years since gaining the right to vote, however, Women still experience significant challenges to their status as equal citizens in 2022. With each issue that is addressed, women have continued to persevere through the waters of justice. However, despite making up 50% of the human population and commanding a majority of those employed in the field of psychology, women still suffer from an overwhelming gender-bias as well as a low level of access to treatments and resources in regard to many neurological disorders. This unfortunate fact is particularly prevalent in the female community who live with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The existence of conventional social structures, gender-biases toward girls and women, and the overall lack of expertise in the ADHD specialty contribute to this disparity. Girls and Women who struggle with ADHD are more likely to experience high levels of anxiety, succumb to depression, and, more generally speaking, suffer from a lack of productivity and social inclusivity as a result. Women with ADHD are also far less likely to receive formal diagnoses, which further leads to a lack of treatment causing these women to suffer in silence without any guidance on how to navigate their lives.

Ning Xie

Exploring Family Involved Treatment with Autistic Children of Color

This study explores family involvement in treating autistic children from communities of color. Four participants contributed to the interviews, including two psychologists and two therapists who specialized in working with autistic children. The interviews were all semi-structured and conducted over Zoom. The researcher utilized qualitative procedures to establish the primary codes. Five major themes emerged: the clinical perception of ASD, cultural contributors, the therapists' countertransference, treatment approach, and reforming the system. This study may inform clinicians, parents, and schoolteachers to understand the importance of family involvement in autism treatment. Furthermore, it offers practical modalities to consider while working with the minority population from a multicultural approach.