

Dissertation Abstracts

Congratulations and best wishes to Henry Kronner, Robin Smith and Laura Wrenn. The dissertation topics continue to represent the diversity of interests and the commitment to clinical practice of our Ph.D. students. Dissertations are available on the 8th floor of Loyola's Lewis Library, 25 E. Pearson.

The Importance of Therapist Self-Disclosure in the Therapeutic Relationship as Perceived by Gay Male Patients in Treatment with Gay Male Therapists: A Mixed Methods Approach

Henry W. Kronner

Gay men have been oppressed and discriminated throughout their entire lives. Even before they became aware of being gay, gay men have heard negative comments and statements. For example, many religions denounce homosexuality to be a sin and a terrible evil. In addition, politicians state that being gay is not an acceptable lifestyle; this is evidenced by not allowing gays to marry, not allowing gays to serve openly in the military and so forth. The oppression and discrimination has led gay men to feel isolated and in need of feeling connected to others. Therefore, as gay men seek counseling, they also seek connections with their therapists. One way therapists can facilitate these connections is through the use of therapist self-disclosure.

This study sought from the gay male patients' perspectives how therapist self-disclosure facilitated the development of connections or hampered the development of connections between patients and their therapists. There are two primary forms of self-disclosure: explicit self-disclosures and implicit self-disclosures. The results showed that therapists self-disclosed more implicitly than explicitly. In addition, both explicit and implicit self-disclosures did lead to developing connections between therapists and their patients.

African American Male Adolescents Speaking in Their Own Voices: A Narrative Method for Telling Their Stories and Assessing Identity Development

Robin L. Smith

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how African American male adolescents define and assert a sense of male identity, how they speak in their own voices and assign meaning to their life experiences as they begin the journey to manhood.

This study uses an ethnographic case study approach that utilized a purposive sample technique to identify seven African American male adolescents who resided in a mid-western residential treatment facility. A storyboard was developed and utilized to conduct ethnographic interviews with the sample participants. The data were analyzed through open and axial coding strategies. By using this approach, the study discovered the diverse yet rich narratives of these young men. The analysis of the data examined three focal areas: identity, lived experiences and resiliency. Through their stories, five themes emerged that clearly define how these young males construct their identity. The findings suggest that these young men are very resilient despite daily adversities and challenges in their life. The findings also reveal that the study sample members had a strong sense of identity, are socially competent, and have developed insight into the realities of Black manhood.

The Relationship between Personal Trauma Exposure and Secondary Traumatic Stress for Social Workers

Laura Wrenn

Two hundred and fifty social workers from a random sample selected from the Illinois chapter of the National Association of Social Workers participated in a mailed survey. The study describes the relationship between social workers' personal trauma exposure and secondary traumatic stress. A secondary purpose was to explore social workers' attitudes concerning direct trauma exposure in the workplace, and to distinguish between direct trauma exposure and secondary trauma exposure. The survey was composed of instruments which measured direct stress exposure in the form of client violence, satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress scales, and the history of trauma exposure outside of the workplace. The survey also had qualitative questions to measure potential sources of trauma in the workplace, and how to mitigate workplace stress. There are several major findings. Having a childhood trauma history increases the risk of secondary traumatic stress. Secondary exposure to client trauma increases levels of secondary traumatic stress, especially when the social workers' personal trauma history is similar to the clients' trauma experience. As compassion satisfaction increases, levels of secondary traumatic stress decrease. Direct workplace stress, in the form of exposure to client violence (at moderate to high levels), increases risk of secondary traumatic stress. Social workers identify both positive co-worker and management support systems as important in mitigating workplace stress and trauma. The study identifies how social workers are exposed to both primary and secondary trauma experiences, and discusses implications for policy change to provide a supportive environment for social work.