

Dissertation Abstracts

Successful Family Reunification: The Contribution of Clinical Social Work

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This qualitative research explores how experienced M.S.W.'s in child welfare practice use the clinical knowledge base of the profession when working with successfully reunified families who had been separated as a result of child abuse and neglect. It also explores how the clinical knowledge base of the profession contributed to the decision to recommend family reunification to the courts. Twelve M.S.W. child welfare practitioners throughout the State of Illinois were interviewed. Each social worker presented the case of a successfully reunified family with whom he/she had worked. The families presented had been separated for a minimum of 12 months and successfully reunified for 12 months. The child sample was bounded by ages 0-12. The data reveals that experienced M.S.W.'s draw from the clinical knowledge base of the profession when working with families and when seeking to justify their decision to recommend family reunification. The study also revealed a list of clinical interventions that contributed to the successful work with the families presented and a constellation of successful variables that demonstrated change and supported the recommendation for reunification.

Social Workers' Countertransference Issues with Spiritually-Similar Clients

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This is a qualitative study of social workers' countertransference issues when providing psychotherapy to spiritually-similar clients. It examined five pairs of social workers and their respective clients and conducted in-depth interviews with each member of the pair as to the nature of the therapeutic relationship, covering four broad areas: similarities, assessment, transference and countertransference, and evaluation of progress. Data analysis was conducted through the use of Nud*ist Nvivo to code transcripts of the interviews into themes. Four themes that appeared across multiple social workers were: 1) the "halo" effect, 2) narcissism of minor differences, 3) sinful feelings, and 4) the usefulness of spiritual literature. Two themes which appeared across multiple clients were: 1) value conflicts regarding homosexuality and 2) mixed feelings regarding medication. Finally, the one methodological theme was the importance of the unasked question. Each of these is discussed for social work practice and education.