

Conference Posters

Saturday, October 21, 2023

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Niagara, lower level



Alex Vanderveen

Affirming and non-affirming factors in counselling for Canadians with diverse gender and sexual identities

From a foundation of minority stress theory and empirically supported competencies for counselling with gender and sexually diverse (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+) individuals, this ongoing study focuses on Canadian clients' experiences of affirming and non-affirming counselling. Minority stress is linked to mental health disparities for those with diverse gender and sexual identities. Research confirms that minority stress can manifest in counselling relationships in the form of discrimination by counsellors. Competent practice, including multicultural competencies, is an ethical responsibility. The CCPA directs its members to refer to practice guidelines while working towards competent and ethical practice. As the CCPA has not yet issued guidelines for practice with gender and sexually diverse individuals, Canadian counsellors may turn to American practice guidelines. This is a problem because these guidelines were not developed within Canada's unique social, cultural, and political contexts. Accordingly, there is a need for Canadian-driven research on affirming therapeutic approaches to guide counsellors and associations, like the CCPA, in developing practice guidelines for this population. Using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, this study aims to (a) identify affirming (helping) or non-affirming (hindering) factors for gender and sexually diverse Canadians who have sought counselling and (b) provide client-informed parameters for affirmative practice in Canada.



Alysha Chan Kent and Dr. Sharon E. Robertson

"An Alien World": Chinese independent migrants' experiences of identity change upon arrival to Canada

Migration trends over the past two decades have revealed a unique group of Asian international students who have left home to continue their education in the North American K-12 school systems. These children are moving abroad independently, without the accompaniment of their parents. Within the literature, these minors are sometimes termed "parachute kids". Studies have focused on the challenges these young migrants face, including difficulties with psychological, academic, relational, and cross-cultural adjustment. Despite the long-lasting influence this may have, little research has addressed the long-term impacts of this experience, particularly as it relates to identity development. The aim of this study was to advance our knowledge pertaining to how Chinese independent migrants retrospectively understand their changing identities in the context of migrating to Canada in childhood/adolescence. A qualitative approach, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, was used to analyze the data as it is well suited to exploring psycho-social transitions and identity change. Results provide insight into how former Chinese independent migrant youth understand the influence of their migration experiences on identity. Implications and recommendations for culture-infused counselling, social service, and educational practices related to supporting independent migrants are discussed.





Angelica Columbus and Dr. Deepak Mathew

Building gender equitable access to mental health support services: An investigation into existing community supports for marginalized men Canada

Men's access to mental health support services is a pressingly important topic, that is more complex than generalized patterns of low help seeking that may imply men are to blame for simply not seeking help, despite reporting consistently higher rates of suicide, drug overdose and incarceration in Canada. To ensure that access is equitable not only involves the mere existence and availability of support services, but it also considers intersecting factors that lie between the services and persons who require them. Systemic marginalization of certain subgroups whose voices are repeatedly left unheard occurs, regardless of well-intentioned efforts. Grounded in social justice, this study is motivated by the underrepresentation of such men in extant research. Diversity in men's gender identities and contextual factors related to access of mental health support requires a commitment to listen and be led by community need. This study employs participatory action research, a collaborative approach in which men who have self-identified as belonging to marginalized groups co-lead and provide their perspectives. Using a qualitative approach, this study intends to learn directly from marginalized Canadian men, who are historically less heard in research, experience unique intersections of barriers, and yet have found ways to seek help.



Branka Djukic

Clinical counsellors' experiences of working with Dialectical Behavioural Therapy at community mental health centers

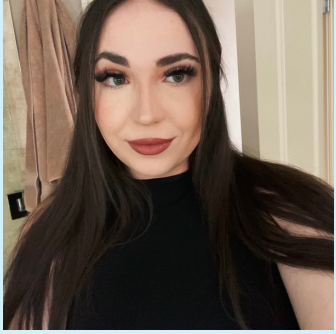
Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based treatment that has shown efficacy in the treatment of borderline personality disorder and other high-risk, suicidal and clinically complex clients. Standard DBT is a comprehensive therapeutic treatment that is resource intensive as it consists of four components: individual therapy, group skills training, telephone coaching between sessions and ongoing consultation team meetings. Community mental health centers serve clients who present with moderate to severe mental health difficulties. Clients with borderline personality disorder, self-injurious behaviors and emotion dysregulation are prevalent at community mental health centers making DBT one of the most effective therapies to use and yet DBT programs have had problems with sustainability. Clinicians from different disciplines make up DBT teams, i.e. psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, and clinical counsellors. Previous studies have evaluated general therapists' experiences of using DBT; however, no study, to my knowledge, has explored clinical counsellors' experiences of working with DBT. As clinical counsellors have training that differs from other disciplines, it is useful to explore their distinctive experiences. This study asks a question "What are clinical counsellors' experiences of working with DBT at community mental health centers? Findings of this study could contribute to better understanding of how to sustain DBT programs at community mental health centers.



Breeana Hogman

Embodying Decolonization: An Arts-Based Exploration of Mental Health Practitioners' Experiences of Decolonizing Personal and Professional Selves

In Turtle Island (Canada), counselling as a system and as a community is being challenged to reflect on, transform, and shift practice in a way that acknowledges colonial harms and centers Indigenous voices. Mental health practitioners are being called to problematize the ways in which the field has perpetuated colonial practices including oppressive and disembodied approaches to therapy and research. Anti-oppressive somatic education and traumatology show that oppression is a traumatic experience held in the bodies of oppressed and oppressor groups. We experience power and victimization in our cells, not just our minds. A critical lens displays ways psychotherapists need to become aware of privilege and oppression experienced and expressed through our bodies. The heart of this project is sharing stories of how helpers have embodied justice or have experienced disembodiment in their decolonizing journeys, both personally and professionally. I propose research that employs arts-based and narrative methodologies to ask: How do mental health practitioners experience (dis)embodiment in their personal and professional (de)colonizing journeys? Alternative ways of knowing and being inspired by Indigenous methodologies guides this study to actively decolonize the research process and goals. Audience members will be invited to reflect on and share their experiences of (dis)embodied justice and decolonization.



Aly Moscovitz

Does Religion Impact Access to Care? Considerations for Counsellors and Practice

Across the United States and Canada, the marginalization of Muslims has contributed to many Muslim women having mental health difficulties, making it essential that services are available and accessible. An email correspondence audit design research study was used to investigate whether mental health practitioners demonstrate implicit bias in the form of aversive prejudice against Muslim women during a request for counseling/psychotherapy services. A total of 450 counselors or psychologists participated. Practitioners received an email from either a Muslim or non-Muslim woman, signified by name and a religious quotation, requesting an appointment. Based on the Aversive Racism Framework, it was hypothesized that practitioners would (a) respond more frequently to the Muslim woman and (b) respond faster to the Muslim woman but (c) offer services to the Muslim woman at a lesser or similar frequency. All three hypotheses were supported. Findings suggest that aversive prejudice appears active at the forefront of counseling and psychotherapy services for Muslim women, whereby counselors and psychologists are unknowingly acting in a biased manner toward a request for an appointment from a Muslim woman. Suggestions for overcoming this bias are provided.



Katie Lysakowski and Krista Socholotiuk

Helping bereaved children make sense of death: Intercultural parents' actions, goals, and processes.

Many parents seek counselling to navigate how best to support their children process significant deaths. The task of the counsellor is to provide culturally competent care to families while following current best practice, which advises parents to speak openly and honestly with their children about death. This can be complex and sensitive work given that parents' concepts and beliefs about death, which extend to attitudes about how and what to communicate about death with their child, are deeply personal reflections of their own socialization. Counsellors working with intercultural parents (couples with differences in race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, and language), may face additional challenges in helping parents integrate both parents' philosophies into these important family conversations. Research confirms the importance of parent-child discussions about death, but has yet to address the processes by which parents go about these conversations while considering socio-cultural context. This poster will present the initial findings of a qualitative action-project method study that seeks to answer the question: How do intercultural couples act on goals and strategies pertinent to helping their grieving child understand and make meaning of a significant death? Ideas for practice and recommendations for counsellors working with bereaved families will be discussed.



Francis Tombu

How do secure intimate partner relationships facilitate narratives of PTG in folks with a history of CSA?

A significant proportion of the population (~16-20%) has experienced child sex abuse (CSA) – with even greater prevalence in minority and underprivileged groups. Robust evidence supports CSA as a powerful etiological factor in the development of psychopathology in general, including all categories of mood disorders, psychotic disorders, substance use disorders and trauma and stressor related disorders. Evidence supports secure interpersonal relationships as a critical feature of post-traumatic growth (PTG) and is considered clinically significant to survivors' outcomes across domains, yet the literature almost exclusively emphasizes the deleterious interpersonal sequelae of CSA – particularly in relation to long-term, intimate partnerships. In order to maximize the potential of intimate relationships as a therapeutic mechanism in counselling, we ought to have a better understanding of how PTG is experienced in the context of secure intimate relationships in this population. This is particularly pertinent as survivors report that their intimate relationships have been treated with a deficit bias in counselling. This poster will present the results of a narrative study which seeks to answer the question: How do secure intimate partner relationships facilitate narratives of PTG in folks with a history of CSA? Implications for counselling research and practice will be discussed.



Divyasri Chakraborty

Listening to the listeners - The voices of BIMPOC therapists in Canada

For a therapist's work to be effective, their own mental health, life experiences, and other factors are crucial. The process of professional identity development might have an additional layer for therapists from Black, Indigenous, Multiracial, and People of Colour (BIMPOC) communities working in Canada. They may find themselves at crossroads when attempting to balance their professional identity with cultural identity. Interactions with clients, colleagues, peers, and supervisors, often play important roles in addition to formal training received. Since identity is purely relational, the experiences of BIMPOC therapists in Canada, a predominantly White country seem to be of great significance for this reason. However, there have been limited studies in this context. In this study, the listening guide (LG) is used to explore the research question(s), "What are the voices of BIMPOC therapists in Canada that reflect their experiences of negotiating cultural and professional identity?" and "How are these voices embodied and expressed by them?" The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of BIMPOC therapists' voices in Canada and to make them heard, which may not only provide hope and validation to BIMPOC therapists in Canada, but might also assist their supervisors, clients, and colleagues understand these experiences.



Monica Kreiner

Start by stopping the harm: Collective healing in a post-residential school community

Grief is an ever-present spirit in the hamlet of descendants of residential school survivors; grief from untimely deaths, loss of culture, forgotten parenting skills, and the silence of the Cree language. When we, the Grouard Seniors Community Club, heard about the 215 unmarked graves in Kamloops, we learned that ground penetrating radar shows ground disturbances, so we decided this technology can help to map our cemetery that the residential school legacy had left improperly tended. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 1363 souls in our historic cemetery are in unmarked graves. When we are in grief from the loss of loved ones, we gather to dig graves by hand, often being retraumatized by disturbing our ancestors. That is the harm we are stopping by mapping the unmarked graves, honouring all the souls buried there, and allowing for new graves to be dug in safe locations. Taking a medicine wheel approach, we are changing the physical aspect of our cemetery by creating and maintaining a map, the mental aspect by verifying the names and remembering the lives of our relations, the emotional aspect by addressing grief and trauma, and the spiritual aspect by tying it all together with prayer and ceremony.



Shanzey Altaf and Krista Socholotiuk

To transfer or not to transfer: Transference of Cultural Values Between South Asian Canadian Mothers and Immigrant Grandmother Dyads

Immigrant parents in Canada face challenges with upholding their cultural values and instilling them in their children (i.e., second generation Canadians). As these second-generation Canadian's become parents, their own bi-cultural identity may create obstacles to instilling cultural values, beliefs, and norms to their children. South Asian Canadian mothers' carry the primary responsibility for instilling such ties, and with the familial interdependence of most South Asian families, grandparents are considered as respected and important sources of cultural knowing. However, their involvement could be challenging as disagreements can arise regarding how, and which values should be transferred. This negotiation must also be balanced against respect for elders within the hierarchical relation. To avoid essentialized understandings of South Asian culture as it relates to family values and parenting, counselling research must recognize culture as dynamic with individuals and families having agency embedded in and shaped by social context. This research brings a contextual action theory perspective and uses the qualitative action-project method to understand the goals, actions, and processes by which dyads of second-generation South Asian-Canadian mothers and immigrant grandmothers negotiate the transfer of cultural values to younger generations. Findings and implications for counselling practice with South Asian Canadian families will be discussed.

