

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE**  
**12<sup>th</sup> OXFORD SYMPOSIUM IN**  
**SCHOOL-BASED FAMILY COUNSELING**

**Robert Black College, University of Hong Kong, June 22<sup>nd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.**

**SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS**

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Dr. Brian Gerrard (*Symposium Director*)

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*Award for outstanding contribution to School-Based Family Counseling, 2014*

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## PROCEEDINGS

In 2014 these proceedings take the form of Abstracts of presentations made. More information may be obtained about presentations by writing directly to the authors involved. The following presentations were made:

*Influences of parents and peers on the pathological use of video-games and internet among Singapore youth: Ecological perspective for school-based intervention.*  
by Hyekyung Choo ([swkch@nus.edu.sg](mailto:swkch@nus.edu.sg))

### Abstract

Although empirical studies and media reports have suggested that a number of children and adolescents play video-games and use internet excessively, longitudinal research on parental and peer related predictors of pathological symptoms of video-gaming and internet use is inadequate. In this presentation, results from two studies will be reported on parental and peer influence on pathological symptoms of video-gaming and internet use

**Study 1:** By analyzing two-wave longitudinal data from 2,974 primary and secondary school students in Singapore, the study assessed the main effects of parent-child closeness and parental restriction of child video-gaming on children's and adolescents' pathological symptoms of video-gaming over time and five interaction terms, including parental restriction of child video-gaming by parent-child closeness, and parent-child closeness by gender. Analyses of random intercept models and hierarchical multiple regression models consistently revealed that higher parent-child closeness at Wave 1 had a significant main effect on the decreased number of pathological symptoms at Wave 2 while parental restriction of child video-gaming at Wave 1 had no main effect, and that the effect of parent-child closeness was significantly stronger for boys than for girls. These results imply the importance of the parent-child bond and possible gender differences in this predictor in assessment and preventive measures for children and adolescents presenting pathological symptoms of video-gaming.

**Study 2:** The second study analyzed four-wave data from 3,071 primary and secondary students in Singapore, using the latent growth curve modeling method to examine whether changes in peer support levels predict changes in pathological use of internet. Controlling for age and gender, the slope of peer support level was found to be significantly associated with changes in pathological use of internet over 4 years, indicating that increase in peer support is predictive of significant decrease in pathological use of internet over time. The finding implies that school-based interventions in the form of a peer support group may be helpful in alleviating pathological symptoms of internet use among children and adolescents.

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*A School-Based Family Counseling approach to school violence*  
by Brian Gerrard ([gerrardb@roadrunner.com](mailto:gerrardb@roadrunner.com))

### Abstract

School violence is a global problem. In the USA the majority of deadly violence incidents occur at elementary schools. Approximately 78% of schools have experienced a violent incident and 17% have experienced a serious violent incident, with 65% of the latter involving guns. An important study by Wike and Fraser (2009) identified the following characteristics of

school shooters: 75% had suicidal ideation; 75% experienced peer rejection, including romantic breakups; 71% had been bullied. Schools where shootings occur tend to be large and highly socially stratified with an in-group, have codes of silence, and have low cohesion. There is research linking school shooters to dysfunctional family structures and substance abuse. These are mental health problems that SBFC professionals are well positioned to address. A SBFC approach to school violence is outlined that emphasizes a comprehensive school-family assessment, including an assessment of school cohesion; and use of the SBFC model to guide intervention at 4 levels: school-intervention, family-intervention, school-prevention, and family-prevention.

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### *More is better?*

by *Pattie Yuk Yee, Luk-Fong* ([pattieyy@gmail.com](mailto:pattieyy@gmail.com))

#### **Abstract**

Ten years of educational reforms have created more work for children, teachers and parents in Hong Kong. The global neoliberal pressures of performativity, accountability and standards in schools coincide with a predominantly Confucian Chinese cultural heritage of high regard for education in Hong Kong. In the quest for “Winning at the beginning point” for their children, parents are cramming their children with academic work and out of class activities. Teachers are doing much more work in coping with the new demands from educational reforms. This presentation raises the issue of more work does not necessary mean a better future for the children. It calls for the creation of space for parents, teachers and children. A present- and process-orientated rather than product-orientated approach is proposed. A mindfulness approach is called for. Parents and teachers as key adults in relating to children need to learn to understand and attune to themselves, and then attune to the children under their care. Each individual is taught ‘Coal’- curiosity, openness, acceptance and listening, the core skills in mindfulness which can help children to cope with the present, be empathetic, build relationship with others as well as resilience in the ever changing world.

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### **A personal and professional journey of emigration: Some guidelines for working with emigrant families in the context of School-based Family Counseling.**

by **Maria Marchetti-Mercer** ([maria.marchetti-mercercer@wits.ac.za](mailto:maria.marchetti-mercercer@wits.ac.za))

#### **Abstract**

This presentation will explore how personal and professional experiences have allowed me to identify closely with the losses and challenges linked to the emigration experience. Using South Africa as the social context for this discussion, I will explore how this country has been characterized by migration trends, although in the past limited attention has been given to the familial and social consequences caused by people emigrating from the country. Linking emigration to a process of uprooting where the disruption of social networks can be seen as the most serious consequence of emigration I will recount the findings of a recent study exploring the impact of South African emigration on family life. The intention is to provide a more

interpersonal and systemic perspective on the phenomenon of South African emigration, but also how this may apply to other countries. I will also explore briefly how searching for a place to call “home”, and where one belongs, remains at the core of the experience that is emigration. In conclusion I will highlight how some of these themes may be of relevance for mental health professionals working with emigrant families in the context of School-based Family Counseling.

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*School-based violence: A collaborative approach,*  
by Deanne Neufeld ([deannen@shaw.ca](mailto:deannen@shaw.ca))

**Abstract**

Following the tragic school shootings in 1999 in Littleton and Tabor, the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Response embarked on a 13-month consultation process with the United States where school shootings had also occurred. The outcome was the Risk Threat Protocol, which was successfully piloted and implemented across Alberta. This protocol was used to identify high-risk student behavior and to set up early intervention to prevent escalation, thus keeping the school, community, threat maker and possible victims safe. Discussed here is a collaborative response to school-based threats and violence following the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Response protocols. In this paper the writer outlines the collaborative response utilized in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada and present a case study to illustrate the success of this multidisciplinary school based response protocol.

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*School-Based Family Counseling in time of crisis,*  
by Andrew Smith ([a.smith@bti.ac.nz](mailto:a.smith@bti.ac.nz))

**Abstract**

Significant traumatic events that affect school communities are sadly not uncommon. These events range from natural disasters to terrorist activities. This presentation is a review of the academic literature relevant to the issue of school-based counseling in time of crisis. The provocation for such a literature review has a personal basis to it. In January 2013 a team from a New Zealand secondary school with which the author is associated was visiting a school in Kenya. Two days before the team was due to return home, several members of the team were involved in a mini-bus accident, and three Kiwi and one Kenyan adult members of the team were killed, and several students injured. The impact on the school and the families was significant and the physical and emotional impact of the event is still being felt more than a year later. The focus of the review is around discussion of the integration of the various groups – students, staff, families, and the wider community – who are affected by crisis in the therapeutic process.

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*Perceptions of school-based child and family counseling in Macao:  
Parents, youth and teachers, by Gertina J. van Schalkwyk ([gjvs@unmac.mo](mailto:gjvs@unmac.mo))*

**Abstract**

Macao maintained independence over the education system after the handover to the People's Republic of China in 1999. Many changes have ensued in the education system in past decade or more, most of which relates to the instatement of school counseling in the local schools. Adopting a phenomenological approach and interviewing, this study focused on the perceptions of school-aged youth (n=20), parents (n=20) and teachers (n=21) regarding the current mental health services in schools in Macao. The findings indicate an overall positive attitude and openness to school counseling and mental health services, and general agreement amongst informants for more professional resources and broader access to services. The paper concludes with a recommendation for transforming school-based child and family counseling in Macao, following more integrated prevention and intervention services to address the most salient needs of children/youth, families and teachers in the school setting and community.

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*Growing up with children through letters - reviewing 20 years of development of the  
“Uncle Long Legs’ Letter Box” Project, by Yeung Ka Ching ([yeungkaching@hku.hk](mailto:yeungkaching@hku.hk))*

**Abstract**

The presentation introduces the Uncle Long Legs’ Letter Box Project which is a letter-based counseling service for children aged from 10 – 16. The service is offered by the Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service (Hong Kong) since 1994, and the Letter Box received 52,172 letters from 17,951 children from October 1994 to March 2014. The service includes letter counseling for children, volunteer training, parent and school education, publication and research. From April 2013 to March 2014, a total of 2,716 letters were received, of which 754 letters were from new service users; 60 community sharing sessions were offered to about 9,700 participants, who were mainly teachers or parents; and 583 Uncle Long Legs volunteers were actively replying children’s letters. The crucial successful factors and the challenges ahead for the project were reviewed. It is hoped the project can continue to provide effective impact for children, volunteers and teachers in the next 20 years.