

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
14th OXFORD SYMPOSIUM IN
SCHOOL-BASED FAMILY COUNSELING

Brasenose College, University of Oxford, August 7th to 12th, 2016.

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS

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Joint Award for outstanding contribution to School-Based Family Counseling, 2016

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Joint Award for outstanding contribution to School-Based Family Counseling, 2016

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PROCEEDINGS

In 2016 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:

A Place2Be. The clinical needs of affluent children in independent schools
by Stephen Adams-Langley (stephen.adams-langley@place2be.org.uk)

Abstract

This presentation considers the clinical risks and emotional needs of affluent children in private independent schools in the United Kingdom. The importance of this study is the relative lack of research in the United Kingdom on the therapeutic needs of children from wealthy backgrounds, despite rising clinical concerns about the mental health of this cohort of children and young people. This topic will present the clinical work of Place2Be in the United Kingdom with reference to the work of Levine (2006) and Luthar (2005). The implications of this research suggest that the SBFC model needs to attend to the clinical risks and mental health needs of children from affluent backgrounds, and that further research is required.

Using reflecting teams to help families develop new meanings
by John Agudelo (jagudelo@mulberrybush.org.uk)

Abstract

Remaining focused and therapeutic at times when clients appear to have lost all hope and exhausted all their resources is one of the greatest challenges that a family therapist or counsellor could encounter. The practice of reflecting teams as a therapeutic tool for working with families introduced by Tom Andersen and his team, following their observation of a stuck therapeutic system in the 1980s, can offer a range of therapeutic possibilities in such situations. The speculative, rather than prescriptive, nature of the team's conversations and the family's freedom from having to respond to them can open up new therapeutic possibilities and reinstate hope. From a systemic standpoint therapy is defined as a process in which therapist and client engage in conversations about problems with a view to developing new meanings and understandings. By virtue of this linguistic interaction that characterizes it, the therapeutic process is conceived of as the playing out of a purpose-specific relationship within a problem-created (therapeutic) system that transcends the boundaries of and contextualizes each individual system that constitutes it. In this presentation the main theoretical underpinnings of the reflecting team practice, its similarities to and differences from the Milan family therapy approach, and some practical considerations will be explored. There will also be opportunity to discuss a case study involving the use of a reflective team.

*Career experiences of adolescent high school learners in a South African rural context –
A Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) exploration
by Daleen Alexander (dinah.alexander@wits.ac.za)*

Abstract

Would a career group intervention lead to an implicit enhancement of career self-efficacy of adolescent rural learners? Within the South African context the government has claimed to invest greatly in the eradication of the backlog in services and resources faced by rural schools in the post-1994 era, thus begging the question whether the latter has been effective in enhancing the self-efficacy of learners as enunciated in international research. The participants in this study included the affected learners, the educators and to a lesser extent the parents, participating in a qualitative intervention consisting of a workshop, focus group discussions and the completion of a career postmodern instrument.

Research outcomes indicated that structural and systemic factors at a macro level by the government hardly enhanced the self-efficacy of the learners, and that further interventions such as career workshops and counselling were required to achieve the afore-mentioned. The implications of the study are that structural improvements at a macro level must be planned and implemented alongside and collaboratively with the counselling services provided at a micro and macro level, involving the individual learners or groups of learners, their family members and educators.

*Teachers' counselling work in situations of adversity:
When knowing students is dangerous and not knowing is useful
by Nyna Amin (amin@ukzn.ac.za)*

Abstract

This presentation challenges our traditional sensibilities that knowing those we teach is a sound educational value. Working in a school not supported by professional psychological services, teachers' counselling interventions based on knowing those they teach confounds their efforts whilst not knowing them seems to result in successful learning outcomes. The paradox is explained through a poststructuralist reading of the findings.

*Towards a decision tree for intentional intervention in SBFC
by Peter Geiger (ptrgeiger@aol.com)*

Abstract

This presentation is predicated on a working hypothesis of four assumptions:

1. Some clinicians are more adroit than others, knowing instinctively just when and how to choose, time and deliver interventions intentionally.

2. All clinician behaviors in performing counseling and therapy are informed by twin inseparable discourses:
 - (a) the goals discourse, which addresses symptoms and problems more directly;
 - (b) the process discourse, which addresses symptoms and problems more indirectly and with an increased focus on unfolding client personality.
3. Different clients at different times in treatment may need the clinician to augment either the process or the goals component.
4. Intentional intervention is here defined as having a coherent, cohesive treatment plan that incorporates necessary shifts in the balance between goals and process.

For the beginning School-Based Family counselor and therapist, who intervenes in an undefined number of systems and sub-systems, the necessary shifts in treatment between goals and process are of particular complexity. There may be, at any one time, a requirement for a shift from goals to process within one subsystem and a shift from process to goals in another. A simple decision-tree tool is therefore proposed, based on assessing client response to and preparedness for the goals-based component.

The Oxford Symposium in School-Based Family Counseling: Past, present, and future
by Brian Gerrard (gerrardb@usfca.edu)

Abstract

This presentation gives an overview of the origins of the Oxford Symposium in SBFC. The role of Dr. John Friesen, Sr. Mary Peter Traviss, Dr. Hans Everts, and Peter Geiger is described.

The history of the peer-reviewed *International Journal for School-Based Family Counseling* is discussed. Recent symposium projects such as the text School-Based Family Counseling: Transforming Family-School Relationships, the SBFC Meta-model for case conceptualization, the Wikipedia SBFC entry, the Pine Ridge Reservation Consultation Team, the Parent-Teacher Relationship Research Team, and the Disaster Relief Project are explained. The presentation closes with a discussion of SBFC challenges and goals for the coming decade.

Ten years – ten lives: A decade follow-up of Project Yucatan
by Judy Goodell (goodell@usfca.edu)

Abstract

This presentation gives an overview of Project Yucatan from its conception in 2005; it will specifically highlight the unfolding lives of ten of the original participants in the project. The mission of the project is based on beliefs that an on-going collaboration between students, families, educational institutions and community can result in significant lasting change in the lives of young people. The particular ten young adults featured have been followed across time with narrative processes designed to highlight their dreams, goals, and action plans

across time, their support systems and challenges, as well as where they are currently in their life journey.

The narrative findings suggest the collaborative and reciprocal interaction of parents, students, schools and educational institutions, working together within the project, sheds light on a potential model of education for rural youth. These narrative stories also suggest the validity of the SBFC model in its work in a variety of settings across the global community.

Teacher-parent relationships in the eyes of early childhood teachers
by Nurit Kaplan Toren (ntoren@edu.haifa.ac.il)

Abstract

Parents' educational involvement has different forms. However, there is general agreement about the benefits of teacher-parent collaboration for all concerned (children, parents and teachers). Thus, this study examined teachers' perspectives of parent-teacher relationships. Participants were 23 (female) senior early childhood teachers in the first year of their MA program. As part of their course requirements the teachers were asked to describe one event that characterized their relationships with parents in their kindergarten. Spontaneously, the teachers described the events from two perspectives: teachers and parents.

Overall, these events, describing both positive and negative instances, reflected the complexity of the teacher-parent relationships. Specifically, findings indicated four main themes: lack of Consensus (trust, ideology consensus, parents volunteering), Consultation (parents asking for help and teacher's partnership initiatives), Management (who is running the kindergarten? and teacher leading change), and Two way communication (parents complaining about misinformation, and teachers being awareness of the risk of misinformation). Discussion focuses on the importance of mutual teacher-parent relationships, and deals with the questions: who is responsible for forming teacher-parent partnerships? Finally, drawing on these initial findings, what should we emphasize in teacher training?

Moving towards a training and research agenda for the next generation of School-Based Family Counseling practitioners: The example of American school social work at Loyola University Chicago's Family and School Partnership Program
by Michael Kelly (mkell17@luc.edu)

Abstract

Two overarching problems emerge from recent survey data on American school social workers' (SSW) practice: most SSW report that they spend little time engaging in school-based family counselling (SBFC), focusing instead on individual student concerns without family and teacher involvement; and few SSW report feeling prepared to conduct their practice in an evidence-informed and data-driven manner (Kelly et al., 2016). This presentation will describe three Professional Learning Community (PLC) training and

research projects currently underway at Loyola Chicago's Family and School Partnership Program (FSPP) that are attempting to address the gap between the best practices in the SBFC literature and what is happening in the field. The PLC projects (in Ontario, Canada, Chicago, and suburban Detroit, for a total n=55) all participated in a year-long PLC related to enhancing SBFC practices in their context, with a mixture of online and in-person training. Participants completed pre- and post-test measures on self-efficacy, burnout, and facility with using evidence-informed practice. For the Chicago PLC, each member of the project (n=18) was interviewed three times over the 2015-16 school year, with a final interview conducted with their administrator to discuss the impact of the PLC. Preliminary results from each of the three PLC projects indicate that there are a range of effective low-cost, self-help strategies that can bolster the skills and knowledge SSW need to engage in the best practices of SBFC. Implications for SBFC practice at Loyola's FSPP and within the larger Oxford Symposium in SBFC community for the 2016-17 school year will be discussed, with an invitation for Symposium attendees to participate in the second phase of the PLC project.

Reference

Kelly, M. S., Frey, A., Thompson, A., Klemp, H., Alvarez, M., & Berzin, S. C. (2016). Assessing the National School Social Work Practice Model: Findings from the Second National School Social Work Survey. *Social Work, 61*(1), 17-28.

***The School-Based Support Program:
Establishing and maintaining successful university-school partnerships
by Joelle Powers (joellepowers@boisestate.edu)***

Abstract

There is a need for quality school-based research that promotes the successful development of vulnerable students. However, there can be many challenges for faculty who are interested in conducting school-based intervention research throughout their academic careers. One difficult, but highly critical element for a successful and ongoing research agenda includes having the capacity to establish and maintain a positive and productive partnership with a school and/or district. This presentation highlights key strategies and lessons learned for forming lasting university-school partnerships from multi-year school-based mental health projects in both North Carolina and Idaho. Crucial mechanisms for success include transparency, flexibility, and active engagement on the part of the university researcher. Findings and implications for establishing and maintaining meaningful university-school partnerships in the future will be discussed.

School-Based Family Counseling: Challenges faced and lessons learned along the way
by Sheena Sattarpour (sheenasattarpour@aol.com)

Abstract

In this presentation, a SBFC professional describes her journey from SBFC trainee and intern in elementary and secondary school settings to SBFC practitioner with developmentally disabled adults. Early challenges with traditional schoolchildren, such as dealing with cultural differences, reluctant parents, students reluctant to involve parents, and working with very young children versus older adolescents are contrasted with current challenges in working with the developmentally disabled, where a SBFC approach is valuable in working with both family and educational professionals.

The Contemporary Critical Consciousness Scale
and it's relevance to School-Based Family Counseling
by Lance Smith (lance.smith@uvm.edu)

Abstract

Racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism, genderism and abilityism are powerful and pervasive forms of systemic oppression that intersect to result in inequitable social conditions which negatively impact children's interpersonal networks, and thus their success in school. The goal of this research is to develop a psychometrically sound measure to assess critical consciousness, which is defined as the ability to think critically about inequitable social conditions, in order to take action against them. This study is grounded in the recent emergence of social justice methodology within counseling and related fields, where counselors take up a commitment to interrupt oppressive systems and cultural norms which prevent the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Our study offers preliminary support for the sound psychometric properties of our Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure. Our hope is that such a measure will aid school-based family counselors in identifying their personal biases and assumptions, will provide counselor educators with an outcome measure that evaluates the effectiveness of their multicultural training, and will expand the empirical literature on an understudied concept that may have a profound impact on students and families from traditionally under-represented and marginalized groups. Limitations, research and school-based family counseling interventions will be discussed.

The School-Based Support Program: Evaluation results
by Danielle Swick (dcswick@uncg.edu)

Abstract

The focus of this study is to present the evaluation results of a school-based mental health program called the School-Based Support (SBS) Program. The goal of the evaluation was to track students' academic and social/behavioral change over one academic year of participating in the program. The sample consisted of 322 students from 6 elementary schools

in a southeastern school district in the United States. The findings reveal significant reading and math growth over time and no significant social/behavioral growth. Future directions in evaluating the SBS program will be discussed, including how to overcome challenges in evaluating school-based mental health programs.

*A changing model in school and family counselling with expatriate children and families
by Gertina van Schalkwyk (gjvsumac@gmail.com) and Anastasia Lijadi*

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to explore and explicate alternative models for school and family counselling serving self-initiated expatriate and migrant communities with children attending international schools. Considering the impact of globalisation, increased mobility, and access to the electronic media we assumed a broad systems and School-Based Family Counselling approach to explicate the areas of concern and where (school) counselling practices need to adjust in the best interest of the high-mobility children. We recruited participants from the self-initiated expatriate communities employing the Collage Life-story Elicitation technique and online focus group interviews to explore the different interfaces of child, school, and family on the central question: What are the immediate and long-term needs of school counselling given the (high-mobility) lifestyle you adopted? Reporting on individual cases from a discovery-oriented research project, the findings reveal the challenges and dilemmas faced by children and families of self-initiated expatriates living in Macao. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of school counsellors and family counsellors collaborating around the frequently experienced sense of inflicted loneliness and displacement due to a lack of belongingness and social support. Both parents and children living a high mobility lifestyle experience social relationship deficits that put them at risk for disabling behaviour and mental health problems. We also discuss the enabling modalities that could be developed through integrating school and family counselling in a coherent system in the interface between clinical and educational settings.
