

Graduate Student Research & Creative Activity Conference



Monday | April 29, 2024
Southern Connecticut State
University

It is our honor as members of the organizing committee to welcome you to the Annual Graduate Student Research and Creative Activity Conference, hosted by Southern Connecticut State University. This event is a celebration of scholarship and creativity in all forms, as well as a showcase for the leading minds of today's graduate community. As an educational institution, Southern seeks to promote interdisciplinary academic careers and both logic and creativity are key components in individual, economic, and societal success. The presentations highlighted in this conference demonstrate the diverse scope of subjects engaged by students from many disciplines as well as illustrating the parallels between them. This conference aims to not only encourage continued work as a community, but also to awaken individual curiosity and purpose. So it is with great pleasure that we present the scholarship and creative activity featured this year and invite you to join in what promises to be an unparalleled demonstration of graduate accomplishment.

The Graduate Student Research and Creative Activity Conference is proudly sponsored by:

The SCSU Foundation
The Office of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs
Research and Innovation
The Research and Scholarship Advisory Committee
School of Graduate and Professional Studies/Graduate Student Affairs Committee

Conference Committee

Listed in alphabetical order:

Charles Baraw	Younjun Kim
Kelly Bordner	Frances Penny
Christine Broadbridge	Heather Stearns
Jeremy Chandler	C. Michele Thompson
Qu Chen	Jonathan Wharton
Emma Cross	Bogdan Zamfir

7th Annual Graduate Research and Creativity Conference

Monday, April 29, 2024 | 4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Southern Connecticut State University

4:30 – 5:00 p.m. Check in
Poster and oral presentation set-up 3rd floor Adanti Student Center

5:00 – 5:20 p.m. Welcoming Remarks: 3rd floor Ballroom

Michele Thompson, Ph.D. | *Prof. of Southeast Asian History; Chair of the Research and Scholarship Advisory Committee*

Julia Irwin, Ph.D. | *Prof. of Psychology; Interim Dean, School of Graduate and Professional Studies*

Jonathan Wharton, Ph.D. | *Associate Prof. Political Science & Urban Affairs; Chair of the RSAC Events Subcommittee*

5:30 – 6:45 p.m. Organized Panel – Session 1 ASC room 301
Organized Panel – Session 2 ASC room 303
Oral Presentation – Session 3 ASC room 305

5:45 – 7:00 p.m. Poster Presentation ASC Ballroom

6:45 – 8:00 p.m. Oral Presentation – Session 4 ASC room 301
Oral Presentation – Session 5 ASC room 303
Oral Presentation – Session 6 ASC room 305

7:30 – 8:00 p.m. Refreshments & Networking 3rd floor Ballroom Reception Area

Representations of Black Diasporic Women in the Classroom

O1.1 *Representations of Black Diasporic Women in the Classroom*

Author(s): Sarah Donaldson

Faculty Mentor: Siobhan Carter-David

Department: Women & Gender Studies; Social Work

Abstract: The trans-Atlantic slave trade system, or the capture, enslavement, abuse, and murder of (mostly) west African people by Europe, the United States, Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands, functioned for over four centuries. Black men and women continue to suffer the social, economic, and political consequences of slavery, and countless sources exist to support this assertion. There is limited scholarship, however, on the enduring effects of the slave enterprise on motherhood- specifically, the ways in which Black mothers have been portrayed historically and culturally in works intended for public consumption. Womanhood and motherhood, for African diaspora populations, are identities that have been forged under circumstances which are distinctly different from those of white women and represent the resilience, recreation, and resistance of those who have carried the weight of oppression and violence for hundreds of years.

My goal for this course is to offer students historical, political, and sociological context that will help them in answering questions such as, “How are the societal expectations of black women/mothers different from those of white women?, What are the catalysts for misrepresentations of Black motherhood in the media, literature, etc.?, and “What are the mitigating factors for higher rates of single motherhood in Black communities?”

O1.2 *Freedom Through Carnival*

Author(s): Danielle Campbell

Faculty Mentor: Siobhan Carter-David

Department: Women & Gender Studies

Abstract: This annotated syllabus will be about how black women have found freedom through the expressions of femininity and acceptance in Caribbean Carnival culture. The class will include digital and print sources to help students understand how black women have been treated in the Caribbean and how Carnival has both given Freedom back and in some ways upheld gender discrimination.

O1.3 *The Lenses of Black Girlhood in the African Diaspora: A Black Girlhood Studies Course*

Author(s): Kelly Curtis

Faculty Mentor: Siobhan Carter-David

Department: Women & Gender Studies

Abstract: Black girlhood studies emerged to combat the continued whitewashing of not just feminist studies but girlhood studies itself, which paints the very picture of girlhood being removed from the experiences of Black girls. There is an incredible amount of scholarship available on the formation of what it means to be a young Black girl, and how these girls live and breath their powerful narratives even in the face of feminist and pop culture erasure. This course would seek to explain the formation of black girlhood studies, its work within and outside the academy, and its work explaining the many facets of Black girl’s lives. Drawing from material broadly across the African Diaspora, the course would seek to inform students of both the field of academic work and demand they engage critically on how identities and childhood experiences form Black & African girlhood.

Positive Classroom Management and Barriers to Motivated Learning

O2.1 *Workshopping the Workshop: Motivating Students Towards Social Learning*

Author(s): Melanie Cardone

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrew Smyth

Department: Education

Abstract: Collaborative student learning is a research proven educational pedagogy. Educational Pioneers, psychologists, and theorists like Dewey and Vygotsky have stated that all learning takes place in a social environment. However, It can be difficult to motivate students to interact in a group setting to share knowledge. My research is geared toward finding motivational strategies to engage students towards social learning.

O2.2 *Positive Classroom Management and Barriers to Motivated Learning*

Author(s): Julianne Spillane

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrew Smyth

Department: Master of Arts in Teaching English 7-12

Abstract: My proposed section of this panel will examine maintaining a positive learning environment through the use of de-escalation strategies for students diagnosed with anger disorders. In my student teaching experience, I expected to face students dealing with anxiety, depression and other common mental illnesses for young people; anger disorders came as a surprise to me. According to Dr. Tali Shenfield and Advanced Psychology Services, approximately 17% - 22% of children under 18 struggle with emotional issues of which anger is the most prevalent (2020). This statistic may have seemed staggering prior to my student teaching experience; however, it now feels appropriate to the group of students I teach. It is important for me as an educator and a guiding adult in students' lives to better understand anger management and de-escalation practices.

I teach one class of twelfth-graders, in which many students are identified as having a social emotional disorder and have de-escalation as an IEP accommodation. I find myself struggling to be empathetic to students when they get angry with me or their peers, because the anger manifests in rude, sometimes violent behaviors. Despite my initial negative reaction to these behaviors, I believe with a stronger understanding of anger disorders, I will be able to better empathize with all students. My intention for this panel is to share the research-based best practices and ultimately provide a new perspective on anger disorders for peers, first-year teachers, veteran teachers, parents, administrators and educational researchers.

O2.3 *Enhancing Classroom Management: Exploring Evidence-Based Strategies for Effective Teaching and Motivating Student Learning*

Author(s): Roger King

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrew Smyth

Department: Masters in Teaching

Abstract: This proposal seeks to investigate evidence-based strategies for enhancing classroom management in language arts education while concurrently motivating student learning. Recognizing classroom management as a persistent challenge impacting instructional delivery and student engagement, this study aims to address disruptions, disengagement, and varying levels of student cooperation. Through firsthand experiences and observations, these issues have emerged as significant hurdles in creating conducive learning environments. The research will explore proactive approaches to mitigate disruptive behaviors and cultivate a positive classroom culture that fosters student motivation and active participation in their learning journey.

The study will involve a review of literature on classroom management techniques, focusing on proactive measures such as establishing clear routines, building positive relationships, and implementing restorative practices. Additionally, insights from psychology regarding student behavior and motivation will be integrated to inform effective strategies for engagement and cooperation.

By examining the intersection of classroom management and student motivation, this research aims to provide educators with evidence-based tools and strategies to create dynamic learning environments. The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on classroom management while offering practical insights into motivating student learning. Ultimately, this study seeks to empower educators to cultivate classrooms where all students are motivated to actively participate, thrive academically, and develop a lifelong love for learning.

O2.4 *Positive Classroom Management and Barriers to Motivated Learning*

Author(s): Athena Singh

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrew Smyth

Department: Secondary English Education (7-12)

Abstract: My presentation on the panel will address ways to refocus student behavior and attention in positive ways to motivate them to do work. In secondary school environments, students are too often distracted by their phones and each other. This causes a lack of motivation in students and makes refocusing between tasks much harder. There is a lot of instructional time lost trying to refocus students. This wastes precious classroom time, and there seems to be a lack of positive strategies classroom teachers can use.

My research will address finding refocusing strategies that will work with a diverse range of students to motivate them to concentrate. These learning strategies will help teachers work with certain disabilities, needs, or accommodations such as cues for behavior. Additionally, educational, psychological, and social theories informing special education can be converted and implemented into the classroom for all kinds of students.

O2.5 *Unpacking Imposter Syndrome in Teaching*

Author(s): Mychelle Barnes

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrew Smyth

Department: Secondary English Education (7-12)

Abstract: My section of the panel will discuss our experience with student teaching as we are given the task of following the lead of successful and seasoned educators. Naturally, it is more likely for us to mimic the teaching styles and philosophies of our mentors as we begin our journey into our classrooms. But once we're placed in our classroom environments and embracing the style of teacher that we want to exhibit in front of our students, we may find it hard to feel like we're doing things right on our own. The most excruciating feeling that I have experienced during my time student teaching has been the feeling of having imposter syndrome.

Some of the challenges that come with the feeling of imposter syndrome include the need for perfectionism, feeling as though you need to act as a people pleaser, struggling with getting things done and dealing with procrastination, and overall anxiety. What I would like to take away from this research is how to mitigate the feeling of imposter syndrome in new teachers and try to incorporate strategies and ideas that new teachers can adapt into their everyday lives. I believe that one of the best characteristics of a good teacher is having confidence that begins within and not just in front of students. It is important to ensure that we as new teachers are not only trying to mimic those whom we have learned but also taking pride in our philosophies and practices as well.

O3.1 *Art Therapy Intervention for Seniors: Dismantling the Paradigm Shift Toward Ageism*

Author(s): Renee Evans

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Laurie Bonjo

Department: Counseling & School Psychology

Abstract: This presentation will focus on using art therapy to dismantle ageism toward senior citizens. I will provide a platform for seniors to challenge stereotypes and foster intergenerational understanding. This modality allows seniors to explore their identity and life transitions, ultimately promoting a positive self and combating ageist stereotypes.

O3.2 *Implementation of Animal Assisted Interventions in a Residential Mental Health Setting*

Author(s): Rista Luna

Faculty Mentor: Louisa Foss-Kelly

Department: Counseling Education

Abstract: Animal Assisted Interventions (AAIs) for the treatment of mental health conditions have shown to decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression, and increase behavioral activation and socialization (Chandler, C.K. et al., 2010; O’Haire, M.E. et al., 2015; Calvo, P. et al., 2016; Stewart, L. et al., 2016; Kloep, M.L. et al., 2017; Fine, H. & Fine A.H., 2019; Lloyd, J. et al., 2019; Yamamoto, m. & Hart, L. A., 2019; Jensen, C.L. et al., 2022). Additionally, clients benefitting from AAIs have reported overall feelings of wellbeing and increased self-esteem (Chandler, C.K. et al., 2010; Kloep, M.L. et al., 2017; Lloyd J. et al., 2019; Neil, E.P., 2021). Clients with serious mental illness experience difficulties with emotional regulations, behavioral activation, and engagement in meaningful social activities (Calvo, P. et al., 2016). The literature regarding AAIs consistently reports beneficial outcomes in these areas. This paper proposes the implementation of AAIs as adjunctive therapeutic activities in a residential mental health setting. Clients will be able to participate in the program upon enrollment, and after receiving medical clearance. Participation will be voluntary and would last for 12 sessions. At the end of the client’s participation in the program (week 12), client s will be asked to complete a survey exploring their subjective sense of wellbeing and overall satisfaction with the program.

The program will implement 3 interventions: Animal Assisted Group Therapy, Animal Assisted Behavioral Activation Activities, and Animal Assisted Mindfulness/Emotional Regulation Activities.

O3.3 *Rich Media, Richer Parasociality*

Author(s): Kevin McGuire

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Christopher Budnick

Department: Psychology

Abstract: Media technologies continue to advance, becoming increasingly capable of transmitting more social information. As their capabilities grow, these media technologies become rich and facilitate human interactions and relationships. Communication through these rich media technologies is becoming a preferred alternative to establishing relations amongst individuals and communities alike. In these communities, parasocial interactions and relationships are fostered with personas, celebrities, and influencers. Parasocial interactions and relationships were traditionally thought of as illusions of face-to-face contact and one-sided bonds but have since changed as a function of media richness, integrating more aspects of in-person social engagement such as reciprocation. Given the dependence of relationship formation on interactions, I am reconceptualizing both parasocial interactions and relationships under the umbrella term “parasocial engagement”. Additionally, to capture the interconnected nature of in-person social bonding while maintaining parasociality, parasocial engagement will be redefined in rich forms of media as “quasi-social engagement”. Live-streaming is one example of a highly rich medium where communities can synchronously interact and bond with other members in conventionally social ways which seeds the space for quasi-social engagement with the live-streamer which benefits all parties. Thus, I will create a new scale for measuring parasocial and quasi-social engagement. I predict a three-dimensional model: interdependent identity, likability, and need fulfillment. I will use factor analysis to condense items and find statistical evidence for the proper number of latent variables. I predict this new scale will correlate with pre-existing scales measuring parasociality which will indicate it measures traditional parasocial engagement but also captures quasi-social engagement.

O3.4 *Preliminary Findings for Buffering the Effects of High Demands Through Exercise*

Author(s): Jarett Talarczyk

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Christopher Budnick

Department: Psychology

Abstract: Exercise is proven to be one of the most powerful modes of stress recovery; this study will focus on whether exercise before work differs from exercise after work for stress recovery, whether exercise before work leads to better exercise consistency, affect, job performance, and job satisfaction, and whether exercise before work leads to better sleep quantity and quality. There have been no studies to date that have investigated the difference between before-work and after-work exercise on these variables. This study will allow answers to be made about the true difference between before-work and after-work exercise if a difference does truly exist.

Preliminary results from a convenience sample of full-time working adults were in quasi-experimental groups based on the time they already regularly exercise and will be directed to fill out four daily surveys about momentary affect, stress, and sleepiness each day for seven consecutive days. The start date began the day after the baseline survey was completed. Results are expected to show that those who exercise before work have more cognitive resources throughout the day and are more consistent in their exercise regimen. This surplus of cognitive resources will be the cause of positive outcomes hypothesized (e.g. less stress, higher positive affect, etc.). The significance of this study will be to show the time course of stress recovery benefits that follow exercise. Future research can implement this to identify the most ideal and efficient times to recover from stress.

- P.1 *Adopting Critical Cataloging Practices Post-Diversity Audit: It's Your Community's Connection to Your Collection*
Author(s): Jessica Anderson
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Yan Quan Liu
Department: Library and Information Science
Abstract: While recent trends in library and information science literature focus on the need for inclusive collection management and development policies, discussions often overlook the integral step of also addressing barriers and biases within the catalog's descriptive data, which is crucial for improving resource discoverability by patrons. Therefore, the objective of this mixed-methods empirical study was to identify and examine the key variables that influence the successful enhancement of online public access catalog (OPAC) metadata following a diversity audit. Employing a descriptive approach, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from a Qualtrics survey of 101 Connecticut public librarians to determine their experiences with collection audits as well as to investigate what drives or hinders the integration of inclusive cataloging reflective of community diversity. Along with revealing a significant relationship between conducting a diversity audit and subsequent adoption of critical cataloging practices, the findings highlight the importance of: 1) understanding the positive impact of bibliographic record-focused audit methods, 2) recognizing the necessity for organization-wide participation and buy-in, and 3) emphasis on the effective incorporation of community and institutional feedback to enhance the representation and accessibility of the collection. By analyzing the respondents' insights into their library's motivations, methodologies, and challenges, this study offers actionable guidance for other public libraries aiming to incorporate ethical cataloging frameworks into their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals in order to meet the varied needs of the patron population.
- P.2 *Inhibitory Effects of Cannabinoid Compounds on Enzymes in Neurotransmission and Age-Related Neurodegenerative Disease*
Author(s): Jennifer Moses & Arulraj Moses
Faculty Mentor: Advisor: Dr. JiongDong Pang, Co-Advisor: Dr. Yigui Wang
Department: Chemistry
Abstract: Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) and Butyrylcholinesterase (BChE) are two enzymes that are involved in neurotransmission. Previous research has suggested that inhibition of AChE and BChE may help alleviate symptoms of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Medical and recreational cannabis trials suggested the pharmacological effect of cannabinoids on the cholinergic system. Here, we conducted the kinetics and inhibition of individual cannabinoid compounds, for example, cannabidiol (CBD), delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^8 -THC), and delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^9 -THC) on AChE and BChE. We also applied computational chemistry and cheminformatics tools to further explore the molecular dynamics (MD) in protein-ligand binding. The outcome of the study will provide specific pharmacological information of cannabinoid compounds on neurotransmission and potential therapeutic effect on age-related neurodegenerative diseases.
- P.3 *Improved Temporal Control of Gene Expression in Muscle Tissue Using Combined TARGET and GeneSwitch Technologies in Drosophila melanogaster*
Author(s): Raveka Avitan
Faculty Mentor: Mikolaj Sulkowski
Department: Biology
Abstract: *Drosophila melanogaster* is considered a good model organism for the central nervous system due to it having four chromosomes, with 95% of their genes being encoded on three of the four chromosomes, and 77% of distinct genes being related to human diseases. Retrograde Bone Morphogenetic Protein (BMP) signaling in the ventral nerve cord of fruit flies is required by nerves for gene specification and for homeostasis, synaptic growth and neurotransmission in the neuromuscular junction of motor neurons. Knowing this, there is a need to be able to determine the electrical activity to which BMP responds to during embryonic development, which can be done by using an improved temporal and spatial technology to control gene expression in a two-dimensional approach. Specifically, using temperature and hormonal combined technologies would allow control over the degree of overexpressed genes upstream from the GAL4/UAS system. We used a *Drosophila* GeneSwitch line with wild-type as control. These flies were held at either 18°C or 29°C for one week until they produced progeny flies that progressed into the larvae stage. The larvae were switched into either a 29°C or 18°C (respectively) incubator, fed RU486 to trigger the mifepristone-induced GeneSwitch system, and the timer started. Dissections to expose the structural muscles were taken at set time points and visualized for GFP expression, a marker of GAL4. We expect that this combined approach will allow for an improved temporal control over the expression of target proteins and eventually allow BMP signaling to function as a sensor of membrane voltage.

P.4 *“How can positive parental involvement influence the success of students in an alternative education setting?”*

Author(s): Faith Barbieri

Faculty Mentor: Todd Rofuth

Department: Social Work

Abstract: Pathways Academy is a private, alternative special education school that serves students in sixth through twelfth grade. This special project focuses on how parent involvement can influence the success of their student in terms of earning a high school diploma in an alternative school setting. After looking at the literature, we can conclude that positive parent and/or guardian involvement can positively influence the student to be successful in school as well as foster an effective relationship between the school and family. Key theoretical frameworks identified include ecological systems theory and trauma-informed theory. This project consisted of the creation of a group for parents that address managing their child’s behaviors, access to resources, and self-care techniques. Outcomes were collected by tracking the student’s progress in school with parent attendance to the group. The overall goal for social work practice is to strengthen the working relationship between schools and families by highlighting the importance of the success of the child.

Key Words: alternative high school, juveniles, parenting techniques, school success

P.5 *The Symplectic Structure of Special Relativity*

Author(s): Ashraf Zaman

Faculty Mentor: Matthew Enjalran

Department: Applied Physics

Abstract: Reformulating known theories in new mathematical languages has been known to provide unique insights in physics. For example, the tensor formulation of electromagnetic theory makes certain symmetries more obvious, which improves our understanding of nature and how to describe it. Symplectic geometry has had a close relationship with physics since it is the geometry of phase space, which allows us to think of time evolution as the flow along a vector field. This idea has had many applications in classical mechanics, geometric optics, and bridged classical theory to quantum theory. We now investigate a symplectic formalism of special relativity which not only may reveal underlying mathematical properties (such as time evolution and the Lie algebra) but may bridge the classical theory to relativistic quantum mechanics. We begin by first reformulating the common problem of a particle moving under the force of an electromagnetic field in the language of differential forms, and then make the particle relativistic.

P.6 *Racial Microaggressions: How pervasive are they among people of color enrolled in psychotherapy?*

Author(s): Thomas Blackwell

Faculty Mentor: Karen D'Angelo, Ph.D.

Department: Doctor of Social Work

Abstract: This research project explored the pervasiveness of racial microaggressions among people of color enrolled in psychotherapy. Sample included adult participants who identified as persons of color, and who were previously or currently enrolled in mental health treatment (N=191). Participants completed the Revised 28-item Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (R28REMS) and the Racial Trauma Demographic Questionnaire (RTDQ). Of all 191 participants, 100% experienced at least one incidence of a racial microaggression in three or more of the the five subscales within the previous six months. The implication of these findings for clinical social work practice is that racial microaggressions are pervasive among clients of color and should be assessed for related symptoms as other psychological traumatic event exposures are assessed, when people of color seek mental health treatment.

P.7 *A Comparative Examination of Dominant Canopy Forming Macroalgae in Southern New England*

Author(s): Kaleb Boudreaux

Faculty Mentor: Sean Grace

Department: Biology

Abstract: Climate change has directly affected the various species of macroalgae in Southern New England via marine heatwaves. A marine heatwave is a period where the ocean's surface temperature is two or three degrees (Celsius) higher than the average. We will look at two macroalgae, *Saccharina latissima* and *Sargassum filipendula*, to see which species dominates the intertidal zone. At 3 sites in Rhode Island, *S. filipendula* and *S. latissima* will be examined around 20 ft for 30 minutes by a Go-pro video recorder which will be analyzed in a lab. Additionally, the height will be measured using a measuring tape. Biodiversity around both macroalgae will be examined using a plankton tow and a fish count. This process will be repeated throughout the year as well as light and temperature levels. Results will vary by seasonal patterns as *Saccharina* degrades in warmer temperatures and *Sargassum* will degrade in colder temperatures reducing their overall canopy size. However, because marine heatwaves continue to be more common, we hypothesize that *Sargassum* will become the new dominant canopy in Southern New England. This study is important because the ecological changes caused by climate change needs to be examined in our oceans for us to understand the new biodiversity that will inhabit southern New England.

- P.8 *Depression in Older Adults*
Author(s): Heather Bracken
Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work
Abstract: Depression in older adults is a mental health issue faced in many communities in the United States and around the world. This project will address the need of the Branford community for resources for depression in older adults. The population of Branford is 28,148 residents and the median age is 51.3. People over the age of 65 is 26.8% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Branford Town, South Central Connecticut Planning Region, Connecticut, 2018). Older adults are amongst the caseload of every clinician at the Branford Counseling Center. A clear and understandable deliverable with resources and general information about depression in older adults would be a helpful resource for the Branford Counseling Center.
- P.9 *Promoting Equity: Addressing Barriers to Black Women's Advancement in Senior Leadership Roles within Higher Education*
Author(s): Ebonee Brown
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: According to findings compiled in a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, Black women have been obtaining degrees at a consistently high rate for the last eight years and counting (Essence, 2020). A significant gap exists between the academic achievements of Black women and their representation in leadership roles within higher education institutions. The underrepresentation persists due to several key factors like Homosociability, tokenism, professional discrimination, and the burden of the “Strong Black Woman” stereotype. It is important to be aware of aspiring Black women seeking senior level roles to ensure they are represented in a way that mirrors the growing diverse student population in higher education. Representation can provide students with a sense of belonging as well as increase their overall academic success. Prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and ensuring that Black women are adequately represented in senior leadership roles not only promotes equity within academia, but also fosters an environment where all students feel valued and supported in their educational journey. In my poster presentation I will highlight policy-focused research regarding current approaches and actionable recommendations for fostering a more inclusive environment that empowers Black women to ascend to leadership positions within higher education institutions.
- P.10 *The SCSU Community Practice Social Work Alum Council*
Author(s): Astrid Chapman
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work
Abstract: Opportunely trained and passionately responsive, the empowered minority of SCSU community practice social work alum are positioned to help revitalize the vision and mission of social work educational programs and social welfare initiatives across the country. A graduate organized SCSU Community Practice social work Alum Council will help raise awareness about social justice initiatives and garner support for the community practice social work career track. The council will also help reorient dualistic social work ideology and bridge the divide between micro / clinical, and macro / community practice. The alum council will pursue objectives to 1) Facilitate deeper critical inquiry and analysis of oppressive social constructs and the colonization of the social work profession 2) Promote civic engagement and political action amongst social work students and practitioners, 3) Mentor community practice BSW, MSW, and DSW students, coordinate professional trainings, facilitate group work, and provide peer support 4) Manage and maintain a website / digital hub that will foster membership amongst council members through virtual alum networks including email signups, chatrooms, and social media links. The website will also list upcoming macro social work events, meetings, conferences, and support groups to attend. In the words of Hans Falk (1984), “Membership is the very heart of life,” and as active members and peer mentors within the social work alum council, SCSU community practice social work alum will have the potential to create an inclusive sanctuary within the heart of the social work profession.
- P.11 *Impact of New York State's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies on a Cohort of Former Ancillary Psychiatric Hospital Employees*
Author(s): Emmanuel Charles
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Stephen Monroe Tomczak
Department: Social Work
Abstract: This mixed method study endeavored to investigate the impact New York state's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies had on a cohort of 25 former ancillary psychiatric hospital employees. In addition, it sought to explore the relationship between the implementation of DEI policies in that hospital and the former employees'

satisfaction with their job while they worked there. The results indicate the majority of the study participants did not feel included in the daily affairs of the hospital. Nor did they feel they were treated equitably. More importantly, they reported while the hospital employed a diverse workforce, diversity existed only among lower rank employees while upper management was dominated by non-ethnic minorities. The outcomes of this study suggest further research is needed to fully appreciate the impact of New York's DEI policies on ancillary psychiatric hospital workers. Moreover, the state of New York must modify its DEI policies to benefit all its employees by making them more inclusive and equitable.

P.12 *Effect of the Effortful Swallow on Lingual Swallow Pressure in Healthy Adults*

Author(s): Meghan Dalton

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Julian B. Smith

Department: Communication Disorders

Abstract: The effortful swallow is a compensatory and rehabilitative technique employed by speech language pathologists (SLP) for patients with oropharyngeal dysphagia; however, the impact of the effortful swallow on the oral phase of swallowing is not fully understood. In particular, how the effortful swallow affects lingual swallow pressures (LSP). In this study, regular and effortful LSP differentials across bolus consistency and age were explored in healthy adults to provide normative data for SLPs evaluating and treating individuals with impaired lingual strength and function.

Data from thirty-eight participants (14 males; 24 females) were analyzed for this study. Ages ranged from 21 to 39 years (mean age = 26.72) in the younger group and 62 to 83 years (mean age = 69.36) in the older group. A statistically significant difference of 17.46 kPa was observed between swallow type (regular, effortful) and LSP ($p < 0.001$). There was not a significant effect for age ($p = 0.970$) or bolus consistency ($p = 0.290$).

Results from the current study suggest the effortful swallow significantly increases lingual swallow pressure (LSP) by approximately 17.46 kPa in normal adults regardless of age or bolus consistency. Therefore, swallowing effortfully can be used as a strategy to increase LSP during liquid and solid bolus swallows in both younger and older adults. Future studies should investigate LSP in patients with oropharyngeal dysphagia to further understand the relationship between LSP and disordered swallowing.

P.13 *Navigating the Demographic Cliff: Equitable Credit for Prior Learning Policies and Connecticut Public Higher Education Institutions*

Author(s): Kaylah Davis

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh

Department: Educational Leadership

Abstract: Higher education institutions in the United States are facing an anticipated decline in enrollment, also known as the demographic cliff. With less students immediately entering college upon completion of high school -- often due to cost, entering the workforce, and family and life obligations -- higher education institutions must shift focus to this new population that has been often overlooked in the field: the "non-traditional" student. Age is a primary characteristic when defining a non-traditional student and can also include factors like work or life experience. The non-traditional student experience often differs from higher education's "traditional" students, and may require a different approach to academics and student life than what a higher education institution typically provides. Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is an approach that offers students a means of earning credit alternatively. CPL may include credit for examinations like CLEP or AP, portfolio-based papers that encompass how a student's experience meets learning outcomes, military credit, and/or credit for training and certifications. While there are many options within the CPL landscape, the approach in accepting, reviewing, and awarding these often vary on the institutional, state, and regional levels. Not having a standard policy for awarding CPL, in this case, for public Connecticut colleges, is an equity issue. This poster of a research policy brief reviews the current CPL policy that exists in Connecticut, and provides policy recommendations to Connecticut public higher education institutions to ensure an equitable approach to awarding CPL.

P.14 *An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Mental Health First Aid Training on Correctional Officer's Emotional Intelligence*

Author(s): Lleidys De Leon

Faculty Mentor: Dr. D'Angelo

Department: Doctorate in Social Work

Abstract: This poster addresses the critical issue of correctional officers' (COs) mental health within the challenging correctional environment. The literature review highlights the significant risks and organizational stressors COs face, leading to burnout and severe mental health issues. Moreover, it underscores the lack of research on COs' interactions

with mentally ill inmates and their own mental well-being. The intervention involves Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training, aiming to address these challenges. This pilot study investigates the impact of MHFA training on COs' emotional intelligence (EI), encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, thus enhancing their overall mental well-being and ability to manage stressful situations. Results reveal a high level of participant satisfaction with the MHFA training program,. Implications suggest that implementing MHFA training programs within CT DOC facilities can significantly enhance correctional officers' well-being by equipping them with the necessary skills to manage their emotions and respond effectively to mental health crises among inmates.

- P.15 *The Availability, Use, and Preservation of Video Game Collections in Academic Libraries throughout Connecticut*
Author(s): Douglas Edrich
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Yan Quan Liu
Department: Masters of Library and Information Science
Abstract: Which academic libraries have video game collections? What do they use it for and do they know about video game related academia? This paper examines the results of a survey of Connecticut's 30 academic libraries, soliciting feedback on which libraries have a working video game collection, any issues or challenges that they face, if they have video game programming, and if librarians are aware of video game related academia. Research suggests that most academic libraries do not have a video game collection. Results also showed that despite this, there was an interest in video game programming, but a lack of knowledge in starting the process. The results also showed that most librarians are unaware of video game related academia, which would negatively impact the library and the students in those types of programs. Some contributing factors in why these concepts have not been realized may be a lack of funding, technological expertise, patron interest, or staff understanding, despite the many possible upsides.
- P.16 *The Changing Landscape of Higher Education and the Stopped-Out Student*
Author(s): Carla Flynn
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: A "stopped-out" student is someone who withdraws from a university for a period of time. Despite the growing number of non-traditional adult learners and shrinking high school populations, universities unwilling or unable to change their recruitment strategies, program offerings, course modalities, and schedules prevent stopped-out adult students from returning to higher education to complete credentials and degrees. One in six adults in the United States are stop-out students or students who were at some point enrolled in college but never graduated with a degree or certification. This equates to 30-35 million potential under-enrolled students in the United States. Institutions unable to pivot their strategic enrollment plans to include these modern students and meet their educational and supplemental needs are on the verge of closure, institutional mergers, or dwindling relevance in today's higher education landscape. This poster shows research for a policy brief detailing enrollment population considerations, a visual presentation of institutional success in enrollment with varied course modalities and offerings, and vital resources and support services that lead to modern student success. It highlights the challenges higher education institutions face in navigating modern student enrollment, proven strategies for attracting and retaining modern students, and considerations for the future of degree obtainment.
- P.17 *A Blue Economy Agenda for the Eastfjords, Iceland*
Author(s): Noelle King
Faculty Mentor: Patrick Heidkamp
Department: Environmental Studies
Abstract: The global imperative for resilience-building in the face of climate change demands a transition to a just and sustainable Blue Economy. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the currently existing ocean economy in eastern Iceland and subsequently determine the potential for, and avenues of, transitioning toward a just and sustainable Blue Economy. A combination of a GIS-based ocean economy inventory, a thorough review of literature to identify risks and opportunities for the Eastfjords, and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews culminate in a roadmap for the transition from an ocean economy toward a just and sustainable Blue Economy. The study area for this research is the Múlaþing municipality in the Eastfjords region of Iceland. Using data collected from field work in July 2023, maps of ocean economy businesses in each town within the municipality were created. A case study of Seyðisfjörður, Iceland resulted in the identification of two risks and two opportunities. The region's small communities create an opportunity for higher community engagement, and there is also an opportunity for economic diversification. The two risks identified are youth outmigration and an environmentally and socio-economically unsustainable tourism industry. This project underscores the potential for Múlaþing and other coastal communities to move toward resilience by engaging in the transition toward a Blue Economy that is both just and sustainable.

P.18 *Medical Social Work: The Voice of the People*

Author(s): Tyanna Garner

Faculty Mentor: Steven Hoffler

Department: Social Work

Abstract: This presentation is centered on social work in a medical setting with a focus on the pediatric and adult emergency department populations. The presentation will highlight some of the challenges and rewards to provide insight to peers in addition to perspective students that are considering this field of practice. Social workers closely collaborate with other medical professionals to foster humanizing services to patients and families while in the hospital and advocate for best social practices as it relates to safe discharge into the community while aiming to decrease hospital readmission.

P.19 *Latine Social Workers Critically Reclaiming Indigeneity*

Author(s): Jennifer Gereda

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Keenan

Department: Doctorate in Social Work

Abstract: Despite decolonizing work happening around the globe, there is little written about or researched on bringing decolonizing into practice with cis women in the United States, including their awareness of the colonialism their ancestors experienced. Reindigenizing efforts are being actively addressed with indigenous peoples in tribal nations in the U.S., this workshop focuses specifically on Latine peoples who immigrate to the U.S. This workshop will utilize the facilitator's roots from Guatemala as the fertilizer to nourish the seeds we desire to spread and grow so that we may all have a decolonized garden where nativity prevents erosion.

Re-indigenizing efforts are being actively addressed with indigenous peoples in tribal nations in the U.S. This workshop is focused on Latine people who immigrate to the United States. Topics such as coloniality, labor exploitation, genocide, forced relocation, cultural erasure via assimilation, and Western influence are discussed. In response to people who are seeking to offer re-indigenizing workshops in their community of practice or to continue in their efforts to not perpetuate oppression, this workshop is designed and implemented to expand knowledge and provide the soil to replenish the exploitation of our lands and spirit.

P.20 *Social Work Capstone Project 2024*

Author(s): Valerie Girard, Channelle Fuentes, Dierdra Colavolpe & Brittany Williams

Faculty Mentor: Joyce Taylor

Department: Social work

Abstract: This poster presentation features the work of 4 MSW students as they applied research to practice. Their special projects were written for school staff, administrators and the general public. Valerie Girard emphasized the potential gains of creating positive classroom environments through the use of positive psychology interventions. This collaboration between social work and educators can prevent the need for behavioral interventions. Deirdre Colavolpe's project focused on trauma informed practices to address racial disparities in disciplinary actions. Brittany Williams's project calls for increased mental health supports in schools to benefit their academic performance and social adjustment. Channelle Fuentes designed a pamphlet for teenage girls to understand the school-based resources for reproductive rights.

P.21 *Healthcare Staff Burnout*

Author(s): Veenita Govinden

Faculty Mentor: Todd Roffuth

Department: Social Work

Abstract: Staff burnout in healthcare settings such as hospitals and nursing homes has become a norm that has been overlooked. In nursing homes healthcare workers are expected to provide adequate and high-quality care to each individual resident. Healthcare workers are overworked on a daily basis causing for burnout symptoms to be present, this being a norm for healthcare workers it becomes difficult to self-identify when burnout symptoms are present and affecting their own wellbeing. Burnout has negative effects such as exhaustion, insomnia, and anxiety. Functionalist theory and constructivism theory are two theories that have been seen in developing questionnaires for healthcare workers in the past to identify burnout. The deliverable that has been developed for this special project is a burnout questionnaire that has been reconstructed to help healthcare workers identify which aspects of their job and life is causing burnout.

Keywords: Burnout, Self-identify, Mental Health, Self-Care

- P.22 *The Effect Of News Modality And Emotional Valence Of The Message On The Skepticism Of The News Item*
Author(s): Seamus Harvey
Faculty Mentor: Patricia Kahlbaugh
Department: Psychology
Abstract: The current study sought to find out what may make people more skeptical of some information or more gullible of other information, the current study examined the role modality and emotional valence have on skepticism. Participants were randomly assigned to either listen to or read a story with either a positive or neutral affect. To measure skepticism, participants were presented with a sheet of 15 facts. They were able to mark up to 10 facts as being false. Under Sundar's (2008) MAIN model, we hypothesized that news presented in a text format would promote more skepticism. We also hypothesized that news presented with a neutral valence would promote more skepticism because emotionally charged information inhibits critical thinking (Osterhouse & Brock, 1970). Emotional response was evaluated via the PANAS as a manipulation check. A 2x2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA was used to analyze the data. Findings are pending however, it has been found that valence caused a change in skepticism.
- P.23 *Community Resource Guide*
Author(s): Nikisha Hayes
Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work
Abstract: Aging is a process that can create a level of vulnerability. According to my research and experience, older adults benefit from intergeneration connection, case management and advocacy/policy practice. Social workers in the gerontology field assess the client connect and refer them to resources as well as advocate for services. This capstone project provides a resource guide for social workers and older adults in the Stamford area.
- P.24 *Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills for Parents and Adolescents with Mental Health Needs*
Author(s): Samantha Henriquez
Faculty Mentor: Denise Dawson
Department: Social Work
Abstract: Effective communication between parents and adolescents is crucial for supporting adolescent mental health. This study conducted an in-depth literature review to identify significant factors impacting communication within the parent and adolescent dyad. It was found that unresolved trauma among parents and the connectedness between parents and adolescents are key factors influencing communication. Addressing these issues is essential to create a positive support system for adolescents and to better meet their mental health needs. The capstone deliverable of this research will be an informative workbook designed to be distributed to clients and family members as a learning tool, serving as a proactive approach when dealing with family conflict or mental health challenges. The workbook will emphasize creating open, non-judgmental dialogues with adolescents and taking a humanistic approach to understanding their needs.
- P.25 *Supporting Parents after Discharge from Psychiatric Hospitals*
Author(s): Carlos Hernandez
Faculty Mentor: Joyce Taylor
Department: Social Work MSW
Abstract: At any one time, there are up to 15 adolescents receiving treatment at the Yale Psychiatric Hospital, Adolescent Unit, LV2 due to crisis. They're determined to be at risk of harming themselves or others. The average inpatient psychiatric hospital stay is from 7 - 10 days, during which time many of them are receiving Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). The intern observed a pattern of readmissions. Discharged youth would have more success if parents had more information on how to support the clinical gains of their children.
- P.26 *Exploring the Past and Possible Future of Early Racial Imbalance Acts*
Author(s): Alexandra Jean-Francois
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: Education has always been an important part of United States History. When this country was first established during colonial times, key educational institutions that were built were Harvard University in 1636 in Massachusetts, Yale University in Connecticut in 1710, and four other colleges in Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. But these were intended for wealthy men. To build the more equitable educational system we have today, the journey had numerous challenges including though policies enacted by government that required

compliance through implementation. “Implementation means the administration of the law in which various actors, organizations, procedures, and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect in an effort to attain policy or program goals” (Stewart et al.,2007). In the K-12 sector, the monumental court case *Brown v Board of Education* tried to end segregation, but after five decades this law has still not yielded the results it intended. Additional policy mechanisms created to uphold the *Brown’s* implementation in the 1960s – specifically Massachusetts’ and Connecticut’s Racial Imbalance Acts of 1965 and 1969 respectively -- may have had their benefits then, but are those same policies on the books and being implemented today? The goal of this poster is to highlight research on, and critical analysis of, the Racial Imbalance Acts of 1965 and 1969 using the lens of the evaluation component of the policy review cycle. Policy recommendations are provided encouraging that the laws be reviewed by a committee to fit today’s standards.

P.27 *Designing and Developing DEI Divisions within Higher Education Institutions in Connecticut*

Author(s): Patricia Gagliardi

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh

Department: Educational Leadership

Abstract: Organizations that seek to educate, employ, or otherwise engage Americans must create programming that fosters a sense of inclusivity and belonging for everyone (Moultrie, 2023). Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and measurable goals are critical to the advancement of social justice on college campuses. With the recent banning of DEI offices and programs on college campuses in places like Florida, Texas, and Utah, it is critical for DEI practitioners in Connecticut to think critically about how to construct and strengthen DEI offices and programs across their campuses. This presentation of policy-focused research outlines key strategies for advancing DEI on college campuses in Connecticut. Recognizing the importance of fostering a diverse and inclusive academic and social environment, this research provides actionable recommendations to address systemic barriers and promote equitable access to education for all while addressing the backlash DEI offices in higher education institutions have faced historically and currently. This research challenges DEI practitioners to think beyond mission statements, hashtags, and banners, but rather on how to fundamentally transform policy, which will have a positive impact on life beyond the campus boundaries.

P.28 *Using Environmental DNA Metabarcoding and Visual Surveys to Determine the Impact of Shellfish Aquaculture on Local Biodiversity in Martha’s Vineyard, MA*

Author(s): Katie Kost, Dan & Greg Martino

Faculty Mentor: Emma Cross

Department: Integrative Biological Diversity

Abstract: Shellfish aquaculture has increased in recent years due to the drastic shift in the marine aquaculture industry from finfish aquaculture to more sustainable practices. Shellfish aquaculture has carbon-sequestering properties, provides nutrient stabilization, and aids in coastal protection and resilience. All these aspects are becoming increasingly important as our oceans are experiencing rising temperatures, a decrease in pH and a reduction in biodiversity. The goal of this research is to quantify the impact of shellfish aquaculture on local biodiversity and water quality at a commercial eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) farm located off the coast of in Martha's Vineyard MA through environmental DNA metabarcoding and visual surveys. Seawater samples and GoPro video footage were collected monthly from December 2020 through October 2022 from the commercial shellfish farm as well as a reference site, which contained no aquaculture equipment and had no known history of aquaculture. Water quality parameters were measured using a continuously monitoring Eureka multi-probe. Biodiversity of the relative read abundance was quantified using the Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index. Biodiversity was highest in early autumn and lowest in early spring, demonstrating a seasonal trend following productivity trends expected for the region. The shellfish aquaculture farm also had consistently greater biodiversity than the reference site, indicating the increase of local biodiversity with the presence of shellfish farming equipment. Through the utilization of environmental DNA metabarcoding, visual surveys and long-term water quality data, this research can be used to inform resource management and policy decisions surrounding the placement of shellfish farms.

P.29 *Factors Involved in Psychological Distress: A Longitudinal Investigation*

Author(s): Rachel Kowis

Faculty Mentor: Christopher Budnick

Department: Psychology

Abstract: Psychological distress may occur due to a variety of internal and situational factors. The impact of these factors varies between individuals, and levels of distress may be affected by momentary and persistent influences. We aim to gain insight into the relationships between these factors through this collegiate, primarily Hebrew-speaking sample. The purpose of this longitudinal, archival study is to investigate the influence of anxiety and emotional abuse on psychological distress three months after an initial encounter. Additionally, we investigated the

relationship between physical and emotional neglect as well as emotional abuse on dissociation at both the initial encounter and three months later. We also explored a potential relationship between emotional abuse and dissociation with self-concept clarity as a possible moderator. We used a combination of linear and hierarchical linear regression analyses to explore these relationships, and results from these analyses will be available at the time of presentation.

P.30 *The Impact of Cross-Racial Supervision: An Exploration*

Author(s): Britt Lewis & Nicole Cepeda

Faculty Mentor: Julie Piepenbring

Department: Social Work

Abstract: What is the impact on cross racial supervision? How does the knowledge garnered from supervision and supervisory experiences funnel into therapeutic relationships? Race is present in the proverbial room, and therefore, must be acknowledged and addressed. This theoretical poster examines the minimization of the shaping of experiences by respective racial backgrounds, on the impact of therapeutic work when supervising behavioral health providers across racial lines. As providers, supervisors, and leaders, we must acknowledge the presence of race and give voice to the impacts on various relationships. Social ethos steadfastly shed “color blindness” that once tacitly and strategically silenced the topic of race and importantly, the impact of race on supervisor and therapeutic relationships. More recent shifts toward seeing, acknowledging, and respecting a full spectrum of colors and lived experiences have resulted in awareness and understanding of the power dynamics inherent in cross-racial relationships. Understanding how to navigate and model race conversations in supervision is imperative.

P.31 *Baseline aquatic biodiversity trends via environmental DNA metabarcoding and visual surveys in Seyðisfjörður, an East Iceland fjord, before the proposed installation of fish farms*

Author(s): Abigail Lucas

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Emma Cross

Department: Integrative Biological Diversity

Abstract: With consumption increase of Atlantic salmon grown in pristine waters, fish farming is expanding from West to East Iceland. Introducing fish farms to pristine fjords could cause habitat alteration or introduce pathogens, potentially impacting biodiversity and water quality. Aquatic environmental monitoring does not typically occur before disturbances such as fish farms. We discuss baseline biodiversity data from East Iceland fjords including environmental DNA (eDNA) metabarcoding, visual surveys and water quality data before proposed fish farm installation. Samples were collected in June 2022, July 2022, June 2023, July 2023, and September 2023 at four proposed fish farm sites in Seyðisfjörður and one reference site, Loðmundarffjörðuras. At each site, water samples and video footage were collected at 2 m, 7 m, and 20 m to measure biodiversity and water quality just below the surface, in the middle and below a typical fish farm. Vertical plankton tows from 20 m were also collected at each site. Preliminary biodiversity data analysis revealed potential seasonal and spatial differences in zooplankton and larger trophic organism diversity. Preliminary water quality data revealed no spatial differences. Our eDNA metabarcoding data will be complemented by GoPro video footage and microscope zooplankton images to provide a comprehensive understanding of fjord biodiversity. Due to the increased ability for humans to exploit the warming waters of the Arctic, environmental monitoring in these regions is crucial. This long-term monitoring research, including the use of eDNA metabarcoding, will inform aquaculture management practices about the ever-expanding human exploitation activities.

P.32 *From Shadows to Sunshine: A Day of Healing an Empowerment for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*

Author(s): Quinnisha Maddox

Faculty Mentor: Mark Cameron

Department: Social Work MSW

Abstract: Quinnisha Maddox will describe presented a session with a therapist for single mothers and low-income families with minimal resources, titled From Shadows to Sunshine: A Day of Healing an Empowerment for Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Resources were provided for families to address their trauma they experienced as children, which now affect them as adults.

P.33 *Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Training on Spiritual Emergencies*

Author(s): Valerie Martin

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Keenan

Department: DSW

Abstract: Spiritual emergencies are dramatic, spiritual and non-ordinary states of consciousness involving unusual thoughts, visions, and intense emotions. These experiences are crisis of personal transformation but are often viewed as psychosis by mental health professionals due to unfamiliarity with this phenomenon. This can be harmful to individuals experiencing spiritual emergencies because they are often misdiagnosed, medicated, and hospitalized in

a psychiatric setting. Most mental health professionals are unable to differentiate between a spiritual emergency and psychosis since both constructs have overlapping symptoms. This appears due, in part to the scant attention given to the topic of spirituality in Master of Social Work (MSW) programs and other mental health graduate programs, leaving many mental health professionals without the knowledge and skills to conduct spiritual assessments and address religious and spiritual issues when they come up in practice. The purpose of this pilot study was to evaluate the impact of a four- hour training on participants' knowledge of spiritual emergencies and determine needs for ongoing learning and training. Comparison of pre/post results indicated the training was effective in helping clinicians develop knowledge about spiritual emergencies. Participants identified they learned several interventions, assessment skills, and clinician qualities to assist individuals who are experiencing a spiritual emergency. These findings suggest the training and evaluation tools could be potentially useful for continuing education and organization trainings and as a social work education module.

P.34 *Racial Affinity Groups: A Potential Strategy to Increase Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy and School Belonging Among Black Youth*

Author(s): Ashley Mathews

Faculty Mentor: Karen D'Angelo

Department: Social Work

Abstract: This presentation will review the results and implications gathered from this recent pilot study that was completed at a local Connecticut elementary school with 2nd grade Black elementary students. Participants will be introduced to racial affinity groups as one intervention that can support Black elementary students. Preliminary findings regarding an 8-week racial affinity group with Black 2nd grade students will be shared, along with lessons learned. This intervention occurred during the Fall of 2023. The paper will also provide key insight regarding the data collected, current literature on Black student success, and offer practical ways school staff can support Black youth within their school settings. The quantitative data illustrated modest and inconclusive results. Self-esteem was the dependent variable most impacted by the intervention evidenced by quantitative data collected from students and qualitative data collected from parents and teachers. Future evaluation in this area is imperative. This paper will offer recommendations regarding additional ways to move this work forward as we continue to discover best practices in supporting Black youth within school settings.

P.35 *Capstone Special Projects*

Author(s): Maria Mauriello, Grace Riggio & Kristen Cherry

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Taylor

Department: Social Work

Abstract: This poster presentation highlights the work of three students who demonstrated the full set of CSWE competencies and applied social work research to practice. Their special project covered a wide range of service populations, settings, and ages across the lifespan. Each project focused on different areas of engagement, assessment, and interventions for individuals, families, groups, and communities.

P.36 *Advocating for Comprehensive AI Policies in Higher Education Institutions*

Author(s): Joseph Messina

Faculty Mentor: Sousan Arafeh

Department: Educational Leadership

Abstract: This policy brief advocates for the adoption of comprehensive artificial intelligence (AI) policies by colleges and universities. With the rapid incorporation of AI technologies into various aspects of daily life and academia, a pressing need for institutions to develop clear and robust guidelines to regulate the use of AI is needed. Drawing on research and analysis for a policy brief, this poster highlights the benefits of implementing such policies while addressing the potential risks and challenges. The brief begins by outlining the transformative potential of AI in higher education, from enhancing teaching and learning experiences to streamlining administrative processes. However, it also underscores the ethical, legal, and social implications associated with AI, emphasizing the importance of responsible and ethical practices. Through a review of existing AI policies in select higher education institutions, the brief identifies gaps and inconsistencies, emphasizing the need for standardized guidelines that prioritize transparency, accountability, and equity. This brief offers realistic recommendations for developing comprehensive AI policies tailored to the needs of higher education institutions. These recommendations include policies on data storage, algorithm transparency, privacy protection, bias mitigation, and stakeholder engagement. By adopting these policies, colleges and universities can effectively navigate the complexities of AI integration while safeguarding the rights and well-being of their students, faculty, and staff.

- P.37 *What is the impact of a diagnosis of autism on parental stress levels?*
Author(s): Lex Morales
Faculty Mentor: Elizabeth Keenan
Department: Social Work
Abstract: When we talk about the impact of a diagnosis of autism on children we focus on the child with the diagnosis. Most research on the topic is also focused more on the impact this diagnosis has on the child than anything or anyone else. The forgotten party in this conversation, and especially in research, that deals with this diagnosis in more ways than the diagnosed child, is the parents and caregivers. Parents caring for autistic children know, feel, and have to work around this diagnosis in a way that the child themselves don't process or feel. What are we doing to help these parents with navigating this diagnosis? What services are there out there to support them? Why is there a gap in research on the impact of this diagnosis on parents and the family system and primarily a focus on the children? How can we as social workers and agencies in the community alleviate the stress levels of parents raising a child with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder?
- P.38 *Colorin' the Continents: An Exploration of Racial Inequities in U.S. Postsecondary Study Abroad Programs*
Author(s): Javon Noblin
Faculty Mentor: Sousan Arafeh
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: Data shows that, as recently as 2021, there were over 162,500 U.S. students who participated in institution-sanctioned study abroad programs (IPEDS, 2021). Between 2001 and 2021, an average of 75.29% of students who studied abroad were White, while the average number of non-White students, studying abroad, in the same timeframe was drastically lower at 21.14%. Noteworthy and concerning is that an average of only 5.2% of Black students, studied abroad in this same timeframe (IPEDS, 2021). WHY? This presentation of a research policy brief shares an exploration of factors that contribute to Black students participating at significantly lower rates than their white counterparts in postsecondary study abroad programs. Changes for policies affecting study abroad and/or program implementation are suggested that, if employed, could garner more participation from Black students.
- P.39 *Addressing the Black Maternal Health Crisis in the United States:*
Author(s): Glory Ogbaa
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Keenan
Department: Social Work
Abstract: The Black maternal health crisis is a severe public health challenge in the United States, marked by deep racial disparities. Black women face a significantly elevated risk of maternal mortality and pregnancy-related complications, drawing attention to the critical role social workers must play in advocacy and care coordination. This presentation aims to illustrate the crisis's complexities, including its historical, social, and systemic underpinnings, and to offer social workers practical strategies to transform this knowledge into effective practice.
- Social workers are uniquely positioned to advocate for equitable healthcare policies, offer counseling and education to expectant Black mothers, and ensure comprehensive service delivery throughout their pregnancies and postpartum. By engaging in this multi-faceted role, social workers are essential in closing the healthcare gap and enhancing outcomes for Black mothers and their families.
- P.40 *High-Precision Internal Motions at the Core of Globular Cluster 47 Tucanae Using Hubble Space Telescope Images*
Author(s): Alexander Petroski
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Dana Casetti
Department: Applied Physics
Abstract: Globular clusters are dense clusters of stars and the oldest gravitationally-bound stellar systems in our Galaxy. They have eluded our understanding due to the difficulty of obtaining precise measurements of the internal motion of stars in their innermost regions. It has been theorized that an intermediate-mass black hole may exist at the center of massive globular clusters, but so far none have been conclusively detected. In this pilot study of globular cluster 47 Tucanae, we used state-of-the-art astrometric techniques to obtain higher-than-ever precision measurements of the internal motions of a globular cluster core. Using HST data with an unprecedented time baseline of ~20 years, we have obtained proper motions per individual star with an error on the order of just 6.5-10 $\mu\text{s}/\text{yr}$. These measurements will help to constrain mass models of the cluster, and will allow us to test models in order to search for the elusive intermediate-mass black hole that should exist at the cluster's center.

P.41 *Item Difficulty and Item Discrimination Analysis of the Test of Silent Reading Efficiency and Comprehension in Fifth Grade Students*

Author(s): Ana Reyes

Faculty Mentor: Cheryl Durwin

Department: Psychology

Abstract: The Test of Silent Reading Efficiency and Comprehension is a brief 3-minute test in which students read and verify the truthfulness of sentences. TOSREC is designed to measure reading speed and accuracy as well as comprehension and demonstrates validity in its ability to measure reading comprehension and accurately identify students at-risk for reading failure. The aim of the current study is to evaluate the item-level performance of the TOSREC in a sample of fifth grade students at a Title I school. TOSREC was group-administered in October as part of a battery of pretests in a year-long intervention study. Items are scored correct/incorrect, raw scores are computed and are converted to grade-based standard scores. During scoring, the author noticed that many students got some of the same sentences incorrect. Based on this observation, item difficulty and item discrimination analyses were used. Item difficulty is calculated as the proportion of examinees who answered the item correctly. Sentences with low item difficulties (i.e., too difficult) were identified and qualitatively examined for vocabulary and background knowledge. To examine item discrimination (whether an item discriminates higher and lower performers on a criterion measure), a vocabulary measure in the battery was used to form high and low groups. The items identified as challenging for most students (low item difficulty scores) did not discriminate students based on vocabulary. Factors that may affect performance on the TOSREC will be discussed.

P.42 *Design Applications of Small-Scale Direct Air Capture Systems Incorporating Adsorbent Nanoscale Porous Materials*

Author(s): Kaleb Roman

Faculty Mentor: Christine Broadbridge

Department: Applied Physics

Abstract: The current technological age relies heavily on energy production which in most cases generates greenhouse gases as a byproduct. This has contributed to climate change through global warming. In recent years, a substantial effort has been made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by power generation and transportation methods that rely on fossil fuels. However, a reliance on fossil fuels is deeply ingrained into the infrastructure of many countries and significantly affects the global economy. As a consequence, reaching the aggressive IPCC emissions targets by 2050 is not possible without the removal of legacy CO₂ already in the atmosphere. One particularly promising approach is through the development and optimization of direct air capture (DAC) systems. DAC is a means of removing greenhouse gases from ambient air through a porous solid that selectively removes CO₂ via adsorption. DAC systems can be stationed at point sources of emission, or at a standalone facility; however, their size is often prohibitive for application in a research or educational setting. In this study, a table-top DAC unit was developed within the CT State College and Universities Center for Nanotechnology (-CNT) for these express purposes. The DAC system is loadable with an arbitrary porous solid and provides control over a variety of important thermodynamic parameters. This allows us to gather data on the adsorption characteristics of various materials and compare them to literature and computational results. The DAC system has great and unique potential as an instructional tool for teaching basic concepts in physics and engineering.

P.43 *How Mental Health Stigma Affects Mental Health Service Utilization Among Blacks and African Americans*

Author(s): Charmaine Samuda

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Keenan

Department: Social Work

Abstract: The focus of this presentation is to share capstone research findings relating to the issue of mental health stigma, which has been identified as a significant obstacle for the Black and African American (BAA) community in seeking and utilizing mental health treatment. Existing empirical literature emphasized the persistence of mental health stigma, including the adverse impacts on BAA individuals. Previous research on the factors that influence BAA individuals' decision to seek and participate in mental health treatment is limited. A qualitative research study was conducted to address this gap. The study involved interviewing nine mental health providers for 45-60 minutes to learn about the factors that affect BAA individuals and the strategies that can be employed to mitigate them. This study identified common contextual factors that sustain and amplify mental health stigma among BAA individuals. These factors include the pervasive distrust of mental health services among BAA individuals, racial inequities in mental healthcare, limited utilization of mental health services, and the need for providers to develop strategies to improve treatment utilization. The study brought particular attention to how these factors impact the willingness of BAA individuals to seek and actively participate in mental health services. Mental health practitioners can utilize the present findings to support BAA individuals seeking treatment and to develop strategies to increase engagement and

attainment of treatment goals. Future research could evaluate the efficacy of various strategies aimed at reducing stigmatization and consequently increasing the utilization of mental health services.

- P.44 *Clarifying Different Roles and the Significant Impact of Social Workers who Work with School-Aged Children*
Author(s): Laura Sanchez
Faculty Mentor: Todd Rofuth
Department: Social Work
Abstract: A litany of studies show ambiguity in the general population's understanding of the difference between a school social worker, counselor, and psychologist and there has been a call for clarification throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s, and early 2000s. Further, the media portrays social workers as empathetic people who refer clients to resources at best and as people who take children away from their families at worst. This confusion, misinformation, and hostility in the general public toward social workers results in this population being less able to fulfill their mission of helping those in need. The research for this capstone was guided by Social Constructionism and Social Exchange Theory. The research questions were: What is the perception of the value of social work? And how well do families and other helping professionals understand the type of training social workers receive? The major themes identified were the changing role of social workers through history, negative stereotypes, how social workers understand and interpret how they are perceived, and the undervaluing of social work practice. From this research, a pamphlet was created in both Spanish and English that explains the role of social workers and what resources they offer in the Norwalk community. This pamphlet was distributed to families via the Norwalk public school system. The primary learning goal for this deliverable was to educate families and school communities to increase understanding, respect for the field, and preventative usage of social work services.
Keywords: Social workers' role, perception of social work, school social workers
- P.45 *Critical Practice Skills and Strategies Employed by Street Outreach Workers for Social Work Practice with Unhoused Populations*
Author(s): Evan Serio
Faculty Mentor: Todd Rofuth
Department: Social Work
Abstract: People experiencing unsheltered homelessness – particularly the chronically unhoused – can face a multitude of barriers to meeting their basic needs. Non-clinical service providers seeking to support this hard-to-reach, disconnected population have developed innovative methods to lower barriers, increase accessibility, and connect them to critical resources. This poster will review a digital learning resource produced by this writer that explores theories, skills, and strategies employed by street outreach workers for considered integration into personal practice by social workers seeking to work with this population.
- P.46 *Bone morphogenetic protein (BMP) signaling is required for formation and function of the nervous system.*
Author(s): Ania Simoncek
Faculty Mentor: Mikolaj Sulkowski
Department: Biology
Abstract: BMP signaling serves as a retrograde synaptic signal, allowing the postsynaptic cell to communicate its status to the presynaptic partner. An important class of intracellular regulators of BMP signaling are inhibitory Smads (I-Smads). The sole *Drosophila* I-Smad, called Daughters against decapentaplegic (Dad), has been shown to function by inhibiting type I BMP receptors. However, our results show that in motor neurons, Dad functions through a distinct mechanism independent of the receptors. We also show that there is a homeostatic negative-feedback mechanism that counteracts Dad activity by increasing expression of the BMP effector molecule. Our results indicate that I-Smads function through a distinct mechanism in the nervous system. The ability of I-Smads to work in such molecularly diverse ways may elucidate the particular requirements for cell signaling to shape the brain.
- P.47 *School and Public Library Partnerships: Current Status and Practices in Connecticut*
Author(s): Kaylee Smith
Faculty Mentor: Saira Soroya
Department: Library and Information Sciences
Abstract: School and public library partnerships are not mandatory, so there are no requirements or statistical analysis on the work. This has led to a lack of information on these partnerships and a lack of concentrated support to build effective partnerships. Assessing school and public library partnerships will provide insight on the consistency or lack thereof for these partnerships in CT. This project aims to understand what school and public library partnerships exist and what effective elements and possible barriers exist for school and public library partnerships across the state.

- P.48 *Assessing Equity Resource Allocation: The Influence of Standardized Testing on K-12 Funding*
Author(s): Ian Stygar-Kovachich
Faculty Mentor: Sousan Arafah
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: This policy brief will examine the complex relationship between standardized testing and funding allocation in K -12 education, primarily focusing on the importance of equity in resource distribution. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) brought standardized testing to the forefront and has changed the educational landscape of the American Education System. Standardized testing has been a fundamental tool for assessing students' academic levels and determining school performance, but it poses many challenges because the tests can influence funding distribution. Educational policies related to state and federal funding distribute funding based on test performance. Since urban schools continue to perform worse on standardized tests, schools that need the most funding are receiving the least amount, which, in turn, exacerbates the existing inequalities that marginalized communities are faced with. By examining standardized testing and its relationship with funding, disparities between urban and suburban schools will be brought to the attention of policymakers and educational leaders. To ensure that black and brown children have an equitable opportunity to live a fulfilling life, it is crucial that students receive a high-quality education that fosters holistic growth.
- P.49 *Advancements in Sustainable Energy: A Novel Recycling Extraction Method for Lithium Ion Batteries*
Author(s): Stephen Swirsky
Faculty Mentor: Dr Tom Sadowski
Department: Applied Physics
Abstract: Lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) play a crucial role in powering portable electronic devices, electric vehicles, and renewable energy systems; however, their widespread adoption has led to concerns about environmental impact and resource scarcity. Recycling LIBs is essential for sustainable energy storage solutions to keep up with increasing demand and limited supply. As large numbers of electric vehicle batteries start to approach end of life projected to occur before 2030, there will be millions of tons of used LIBs that will be thrown away as hazardous waste, if an efficient and effective means of LIB recycling is not available.
- In this project, we investigate current hydrometallurgical and pyrometallurgical methods for recycling LIBs and compare them to a novel approach developed by a local industry partner. Results indicate this proprietary process holds enormous potential to extract rare metals from used LIBs, with far fewer preparation and processing steps than current approaches, while presenting minimal environmental impacts.
- P.50 *Autism Resource Guide 2024*
Author(s): Asiah Trimble
Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work
Abstract: I will create a resource guide based on Autism services and programs in New Haven. I also plan on including Autism specific events in Connecticut with dates and times.
- P.51 *Demystifying Quantum*
Author(s): Jeremy Turpin
Faculty Mentor: Christine Broadbridge
Department: Physics
Abstract: In pop culture, the term 'quantum' often invokes imagery of science fiction scenarios involving time travel or atomic-scale adventures, accompanied by the perception of insurmountable complexity accessible only to brilliant minds. However, SCSU's Quantum Initiative strives to challenge this notion and to democratize the understanding of quantum principles and their significance across academic disciplines and industries, with an initial focus on quantum computing and quantum materials. The Quantum Initiative at SCSU endeavors to standardize fundamental comprehension of quantum concepts, highlighting the parallels between classical and quantum computing, alongside the exploration of materials pivotal to quantum phenomena. Through the elucidation of these intricate connections, a profound appreciation emerges for the indispensable role that quantum computing and materials play in driving technological frontiers forward.

P.52 *Bridging the Tech Divide: Empowering Design Students in Public Universities*

Author(s): Melanie Uribe

Faculty Mentor: Sousan Arafeh

Department: Educational Leadership

Abstract: The term "digital divide" describes the difference in access to information and technology, including computers and the internet, between those who have them and those who do not (Lowell & Morris, 2019). This disparity is often seen in education. In the intersection of design and technology, public universities are grappling with disparities in access to essential design technologies such as open lab spaces with workstations, industry-standard software suites (e.g., Adobe), and digital fabrication tools (e.g., laser cutters). This poster presentation of a research policy brief highlights the pressing need for equitable access to design tools to foster a diverse and skilled workforce. Key findings reveal gaps in technology access, with profound implications for student preparedness, diversity, and industry readiness. This presentation will showcase targeted policy recommendations for university administrators and state legislators to consider such as implementing technology grants, industry partnerships, and curriculum updates to bridge the gaps and empower future design professionals. In line with the NASAD guidelines, the presentation emphasizes the importance of preparing students for ongoing technological change, promoting the critical use of technology, and ensuring easy access to labs and technological support. This study underscores the urgency of modernizing design education in public universities to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry.

Lowell, V.L. and Morris Jr, J.M. (2019), "Multigenerational classrooms in higher education: equity and learning with technology", *International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 78-93.

National Association of Schools of Art and Design, *Handbook 2023-24*. (2024, February 12).

P.53 *The Need for Trauma-Informed Police Training to Combat Sexual Assault Case Attrition and Re-Traumatization*

Author(s): Carley Van Buiten

Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella

Department: Social Work

Abstract: This project will address the need for a more trauma-informed response from law enforcement to victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault is one of the most common crimes in the United States while also being one of the most underreported and under-prosecuted. The negative response from law enforcement plays a big role in the lack of reporting and lack of prosecution of sexual assault cases. Rape myths, biases, and a lack of resources all contribute to the negative treatment of victims of sexual assault who choose to report. There is a clear need for trauma-informed training so law enforcement can effectively interview victims of sexual assault without contributing to secondary victimization or re-traumatization. This project is meant to address the need to protect victims' rights to report sexual assault without fear of intimidation, retaliation, or secondary victimization through trauma-informed police training. My poster presentation would highlight my research of the literature about this topic and the main points of my trauma-informed police training.

P.54 *What is AAC, Who Uses It, and What are the Barriers Impeding Essential Social Interactions?*

Author(s): Natalie Vetto

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Barbara Cook

Department: Communication Disorders with a concentration in Speech-Language Pathology

Abstract: This project is a comprehensive literature review that aims to build an understanding of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and the impacts it can have on AAC users and peers during social interactions. This poster outlines and defines what AAC is, who utilizes it, and types of devices and strategies that are available to users. Building upon that definition, the poster also explores AAC users' perspectives of their device and the world around them. This section investigates the supports and barriers that AAC users face while navigating social interactions in their daily lives. In addition to looking at this topic from a communication disorder perspective, further research was conducted to understand the psychological implications of social interactions. Research in psychology and education explain that all humans require social interactions and relationships to live fulfilling lives. Lastly, the poster discusses neurotypical individuals' knowledge of AAC and their attitudes towards AAC users. This research can help support efforts to make our society more accepting of all individuals. This project provides the background and purpose of a larger thesis investigating how neurotypical adolescents feel about augmentative and alternative communication and their users as well as how school based SLPs and Special Education teachers provide opportunities for social interaction for AAC users with their neurotypical peers. The data gathered from the thesis project will be used to help develop a more effective educational program to promote acceptance and inclusion that increases social interaction between AAC users and neurotypical peers.

P.55 *Group Psychotherapy in Adults with Neurological Disabilities*

Author(s): Erin Barrett

Faculty Mentor: Todd Rofuth

Department: Social Work

Abstract: The issue I have identified is that my place of work does not have group therapy for individuals with disabilities. I identified this as the practice issue since group therapy is beneficial to individuals who have disabilities. The literature review found that individuals with disabilities who have attended group therapy reported feeling valued and the group is a place where they can comfortably share their experiences. In a world where they feel out of place the group is somewhere they feel like they belong and can relate to others. The deliverable that will be provided is a binder with group topics that includes a lesson plan on how to run that specific group along with discussion questions and materials needed for groups. This project contributes to social work knowledge by highlighting how groups for individuals with disabilities are beneficial and what specific types of groups and topics are most beneficial.

P.56 *Impact of first trimester maternal marijuana use on brain development and behavior in rats.*

Author(s): Felicity Keyworth, Ethan Boehm, Rijad Brkic, Jayci Jordan, Don'ya Martin, Abigail Nolan & Ivan Teplyakov

Faculty Mentor: Rachel Jeffrey

Department: Biology

Abstract: Maternal rates of marijuana use, especially during the first trimester, are on the rise, yet we know little to nothing about the long-term consequences of brief marijuana exposure during the earliest days of gestation. Recent changes in federal regulations leading to the decriminalization of marijuana possession, coupled with the growing potency of the drug and rising use signal that we are at the cusp of an emerging public health crisis. Our lab is using a rodent model to examine effects of early marijuana exposure on brain and behavior in developing animals. Pregnant rats were administered delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive cannabinoid found in marijuana, during the first 5 days of pregnancy or the last. Offspring were later tested for changes in communication, anxiety-like behavior and social interaction. Our results suggest that prenatal marijuana exposure, even during the earliest days of pregnancy, may have subtle, yet long-lasting effects on behavior. Work examining the influence of this manipulation on brain are ongoing. It is our hope that these results will better inform healthcare workers and pregnant women about the potential short- and long-term consequences of prenatal marijuana use.

- O4.1 *A Partnership of Professionals: An Interdisciplinary Collaboration between Social Workers and Public Defenders*
Author(s): Kaelin Lozier
Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work
Abstract: Social workers have partnered with Public Defenders for many years. Both fields share common values and goals, beginning with their central commitment to serving their clients. However, the partnership between both professionals has developed slowly and lacks effective collaboration. Many Public Defenders are not aware of how to effectively make use of their social worker. Primarily they are unaware of what their roles and duties are, making it difficult to collaborate. My community resource special project is an interprofessional development program for attorneys on how to collaborate with social workers in the defense of their clients. I'm seeking to evaluate how providing attorneys with training and education on the role of the social worker in the criminal justice process can help facilitate favorable outcomes for their clients.
- O4.2 *The Impact of Supervision for the School Social Worker*
Author(s): Jara J. Rijs
Faculty Mentor: Brianna V. Garrison
Department: Social Work
Abstract: School social work is a specialty practice area. The school social worker can often face unique challenges when adhering to the social worker's Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers, 2024) while supporting students under the educational paradigm. This study conducted a mixed-method research design exploring how the type of supervision, administrative, educational, and/or clinical/professional, affected a school social worker's ethical decision-making and competency skills. Quantitative research collected data using a Qualtrics survey platform asking participants (N= 21) to rate how often they covered topics related to the social worker's core competencies and ethics (therapeutic techniques, case management skills, supportive skills, and treatment planning and evaluation skills) and how often supervision tools were used within their supervision (value skills, overarching social context). The qualitative research explored the supervision experiences of a convenience sample (N= 4) through a semi-structured interview. This presentation will review the two themes highlighted by the research: (1) the impact of administrative supervision and (2) the school social worker's resourcefulness. Additional suggestions to support supervision in practice, policy support for supervision, and educational curriculum will be posed.
- O4.3 *Reimagining Education: Centering Black Feminism in Social Work Curriculum*
Author(s): Isabel Alvarez-Diaz
Faculty Mentor: Brianna Garrison
Department: Social Work & Women's and Gender Studies
Abstract: My capstone project, 'Reimagining Education: Centering Black Feminism in Social Work Curriculum,' draws heavily from women's and gender studies to address the urgent need for Black feminist perspectives in social work education. This presentation will emphasize the imperative for social work—a profession professing a commitment to social justice—to actively confront and dismantle its role in perpetuating systemic oppression. By proposing the syllabus 'Black Feminism and Social Justice in Social Work,' it advocates for a curriculum that integrates Black feminist thought to foster more culturally responsive and equitable practices in the field.
- O4.4 *Time Together Workbook: A Family Leisure Resource for the Madison Community*
Author(s): Meghan Lauer
Faculty Mentor: Lorrie Gardella
Department: Social Work and Women's and Gender Studies
Abstract: Quality leisure time has been found to benefit the multidimensional wellbeing of children and their caregivers across the lifespan (Chen et al., 2019; Iwasaki et al., 2015; Russo et al., 2015; Stubbs & Lee, 2004). Yet, scholars have found barriers related to income (Kutrovátz & Geszler, 2023), caregiver employment obligations (Bianchi, 2011), and externalizing disorders among children (Giannotti et al., 2021) to negatively impact the ability of families to engage in quality leisure activities with one another. In alignment with these studies, the positive youth development and clinical teams at Madison Youth and Family Services reported decreased caregiver participation in the community and clinical services offered by their agency. Therefore, this community resource project will provide Madison caregivers and their children with a workbook through which to learn of, explore, and adapt different family leisure activities to the unique needs and interests of their family system.

Keywords: caregiver attunement, caregiver-child leisure, core and balance model, families and children, family wellbeing, family leisure involvement

O4.5 *A Resource Guide for Clinicians to Address Religious and Spiritual Abuse in the LGBTQAI+ Community*

Author(s): Jennifer Jenkins

Faculty Mentor: Steven Hoffler

Department: Social Work MSW

Abstract: A Resource Guide for Clinicians to Address Religious and Spiritual Abuse in the LGBTQAI+ Community includes information and research, the questionnaire, and a guide to affirming religious and spiritual spaces.

- O5.1 *X-raying the present to uncover the past: XROMM analysis of alligator hindlimb movements during low- to high-walk transitions*
Author(s): Danielle Hill
Faculty Mentor: Henry Tsai
Department: Biology
Abstract: Archosaurs (birds, crocodilians, and their extinct relatives) evolved a wide range of locomotor adaptations throughout their evolutionary history. Modern crocodilians can switch between a sprawling low-walk and a semi-erect high-walk while walking on land. However, phylogenetic evidence suggests that crocodilians secondarily acquired the sprawled posture from more erect ancestors. The kinematic transition between the two types of behaviors in crocodilians is poorly understood. Here, we reconstruct low- to high-walk transitions in *Alligator mississippiensis* using marker-based XROMM (x-ray reconstruction of moving morphology). Metallic markers were surgically implanted into the hind limb and pelvic bones of three alligators. Upon recovery, the animals were encouraged to perform locomotor behaviors, with the markers' movements recorded by a bi-planar X-ray setup. This technique allows us to record and apply three-dimensional movement to the digitized models of hind limb skeleton and joint soft tissues, resulting in animations that can be interpreted to describe joint excursions during low- to high-walk transition. Interactions among joint soft tissue models allow us to visualize dynamic soft tissue interaction within the hip socket. Our results suggest that low-walk is characterized by high levels of hip abduction, and that long axis rotation is a critical component of femoral reorientation throughout the step cycle. We observed large amounts of surface interpenetration between soft tissue models during both low- and high-walk, which suggests that hip joint soft tissues deform during locomotion. Our results contribute to a greater understanding of the locomotor biology of archosaurs, thereby aiding in future evolutionary reconstructions of these diverse reptiles.
- O5.2 *Just Whose Stories Are We Telling? Viewing Students as Partners in Curricular Pursuits*
Author(s): Joshua Chlebowski
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Laura Bower-Phipps
Department: Curriculum & Instruction, Equity and Justice in Education Concentration
Abstract: Analysis of course curricula, particularly in social studies, can yield the well-grounded observation that stories from historically marginalized communities may be ignored or severely limited. Such notations may lead well-intentioned efforts to include more teacher-selected stories and lessons to address this concern, but research challenges us to inquire as to the deeper issues that promoted curriculum narratives of the oppressive dominant cultural figures in schooling for many years (Apaolaza-Llorente et al., 2023) (Colley, 2016)(Stevens & Martell, 2018). By viewing students as partners in reframing the course content, educators can facilitate higher-order thought processes while ensuring that students engage meaningfully with the stories that matter to them. Employing intentional reflection, inquiry, and research skills creates an environment where students are empowered to uplift and fill in the gaps of long-mainstreamed curricula. Drawing on recent field research and practical application of project design, this presentation will explore why it is imperative to engage students in the challenging-yet ultimately essential-work of determining the stories included in course curricula.
- O5.3 *Breaking the Cycle: School to Prison Pipeline*
Author(s): Eugene Newsome
Faculty Mentor: Sousan Arafeh
Department: Educational Leadership
Abstract: In 2019, although Black people made up only 14% of the total US population, they accounted for 33% of the prison population, with 46% serving 10 years or more. Among all groups, Black men are jailed at the highest rate in the United States.

There is a troubling trend for Black students who have been involved in disciplinary incidents at school. Those with a history of disciplinary referrals are 23.4 times more likely to enter the criminal justice system and there is a 1.5% increase for every additional disciplinary infraction.

Black male students are overrepresented in all discipline categories, such as suspensions, expulsions, and in-school suspensions. The Data also shows that Black male students are 3.5 times more likely to be sent to in-school suspensions, six times more likely to be out-of-school suspended, and four times more likely to be sent to alternative schools. This data infers that Black male students are disproportionately targeted in school and exclusionary discipline practices in school creates the pipeline to prison.

The purpose of this Policy Brief is to investigate the effects of exclusionary discipline policies and the lack of cultural awareness of black males in schools causes the School to Prison Pipeline phenomenon. The Brief will also explore strategies such as Restorative Justice, PBIS, and Culturally Responsive teaching and its impacts on black male students within the school system.

O5.4 *Exploring Digital Inclusivity: A Comprehensive Analysis of Web Accessibility on University's Library Pages in Accordance with WCAG 2.2 Guidelines*

Author(s): Allison Wendt

Faculty Mentor: Saira Soroya

Department: Library and Information Sciences

Abstract: Academic libraries are designed to meet the learning and research needs of their student, staff, and faculty. As the internet has become a necessity to modern higher education practices, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for accessible webpages is crucial. In order for students to have an equitable experience on or off campus the library webpage needs to be an accessible resource. For students with disabilities, navigating an inaccessible library homepage is a significant barrier, which hinders their ability to fully engage with the library and its wealth of resources.

Beyond the notion that accessibility is simply 'compliance to standards', there is the principle of universal design that ensures the web is inclusive for all individuals. Consider the library OPAC, which has layers of content that need to be accessible, such as research guides, digital collections, and databases. Making these components accessible plays a crucial role in supporting the mission of teaching, learning, and research activities within the academic community. Incorporating universal design into structure of the web page ensures that the usability for all people is enhanced.

O5.5 *Environmental Injustice and Black Maternal Health: Early Onset of Menarche and its Sequelae in the United States*

Author(s): Mousa Al-Haasan

Faculty Mentor: Anuli Njoku

Department: MPH

Abstract: Black girls in the United States (USA) disproportionately experience earlier onset of menarche as compared to other races within the same age group. This disproportionate experience of early onset of menarche is highly associated with the development of uterine leiomyoma (uterine fibroids) in adult life. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the greatest risk factor to the development of uterine leiomyoma is the black race. The presence of uterine leiomyoma in adult life is a major risk factor for miscarriages and subfertility (infertility). This paper will explore environmental factors that may influence the early onset of menarche through the lens of environmental and/ or reproductive justice in the United States. Finally, this paper would propose public health, community engagement, and nutritional approaches to improve the high incidence of early onset of menarche amongst black girls in the United States.

O6.1 *Yoga: Three Week Feasibility Study of a Yoga Interventions and Associations Internal and External Factors in Military and Veteran Students*

Author(s): Nicholas McGuire

Faculty Mentor: Michele Griswold

Department: Public Health

Abstract: Background and Objectives: Veterans are a highly susceptible population to experience mental illnesses including stress. Students enrolled in university also may experience stress during the academic semester with The American Institute of Stress (2023) ranking stress as the fourth primary mental health condition. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that has become increasingly popular in the United States to improve mental and physical health outcomes. This study aims to investigate the impacts yoga has as a stress coping mechanism for student veterans, and what internal and external factors influence the feasibility to practice yoga for student veterans. Methods: This study is a qualitative description that used a Social Ecological framework to explore internal factors including perceived stress and perceptions, and how the organizational environment may affect the feasibility of practicing yoga. A modified Perceived Stress Scale-4 (PSS-4) was used to measure perceived stress, and semi-structured interviews were used to assess internal and external factors at pre-intervention and will be facilitated again at post-intervention. The sample consists of three male student veterans at SCSU and the intervention is one yoga class per week for three weeks.

Results: The results are ongoing, but the pre-intervention survey results indicate low stress levels. Pre-intervention interviews indicate mixed results from advanced, moderate, to minimal knowledge of yoga. Participants indicated that they believe yoga has multiple physical and mental health benefits. Participants also have indicated that their jobs make it more difficult for them to find time to practice yoga compared to their academic workload.

O6.2 *Digital Addictive Behaviors in Today's Society*

Author(s): Jami Joy Gibson

Faculty Mentor: Stephen Hoffler

Department: Social Work

Abstract: How does extensive social media use impact the mental health of undergraduate college students? How might student services decrease the risks of digital addictive behaviors? Some major themes in the literature include - a lack of consensus in the definition or characterization of digital addiction, risk factors of digital addictive behaviors, impact of those behaviors, and best intervention practices.

This capstone project will provide resources bringing awareness to digital addictive behaviors for university students.

O6.3 *Craniofacial Disorders and Secondary Velopharyngeal Repair*

Author(s): Chloe Knopf

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Mabry

Department: Communication Disorders

Abstract: Craniofacial disorders, more commonly understood in terms of cleft lip and palate in children, make up a classification of congenital facial differences that can go untreated. However, pediatric craniofacial disorders can persist due to botched palate reconstruction as well. This problem of incomplete cleft palate surgery can be found, for example, in Asian countries, including large geopolitical presences such as India and China. There are cases in those countries in which children can receive cleft palate repair surgery where the cleft is improperly closed, causing excess air to escape the velopharyngeal port regardless. In this case, it is up to a speech and language pathologist to determine the remaining cause of the lingering defect through a combination of basic standardized speech assessments and diagnostic imaging.

There are many different classifications of cleft palate, including unilateral or bilateral, complete or incomplete, or any cross-combination of the four. Therefore, the role of the speech and language professional in this case is to properly determine flaws in the given type of cleft palate reparation surgery. These conclusions are based on the results of standardized speech tests, coupled with an examination of the patient's palate.

In short, the purpose of this presentation will be to present the methods used by speech and language pathologists to assist children who have not been properly treated for cleft palate and refer them for procedures that have the potential to vastly improve their quality of life.

O6.4 *“Not Just on the Sideline”: A Phenomenological Study of Student Belonging in Special Education*

Author(s): Christopher Gackenheimer

Faculty Mentor: Brianna Garrison

Department: DSW

Abstract: Persons with disabilities must be afforded a voice in constructing a system of inclusion in education to which they truly belong. This study explored the opinions of students enrolled in a special education school to gain greater understanding of the impact special education has on their sense of belonging in school. This study found enrollment in such a school helped reveal to students non-disabled aspects of their identity, enabling them to feel more accepted by peers and staff, enhancing their sense of belonging within the school, and diminishing the othering power of a disability label to provide more freedom for them to explore additional aspects of their burgeoning identity.

O6.5 *A Deafening Silence: The Exclusion of Black Parent Voices in the Parents' Rights Movement*

Author(s): CJ Burton

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sousan Arafeh

Department: Educational Leadership

Abstract: This research examines the historical landscape of parental rights in education, with a specific focus on the exclusion of Black voices in the present-day conservative movement. The historical analysis highlights the significant role of Black citizens during the post-civil rights era in shaping the discourse around educational reforms. However, the current parental rights movement, while influential, does not fully represent the broader demographic impacted by the demand for change. In fact, many of the requests being made directly contradict the progress that has been achieved by those most marginalized by the American education system.

The absence of Black voices in policy discussions surrounding parental rights has detrimental effects that perpetuate systemic inequalities in education. Contrary to stereotypes of apathy, research reveals that Black parents often feel marginalized and excluded from these conversations due to historical and systemic barriers (Lundy et al., 2018). Despite this exclusion, Black parents are deeply invested in their children's education and actively seek involvement in policy decisions.

To address these concerns, it is imperative for policymakers to actively engage with Black communities, recognizing that the Black voice is not only crucial for inclusive policymaking but also serves as a reflection of the needs of their communities. Excluding these voices from conversations around education reform risks creating policies that are ineffective and unsustainable in the long term. Listening to and incorporating the perspectives of Black parents ensures that policies are responsive to the diverse communities they serve, fostering a more equitable and inclusive education system.

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