Individuals and communities transformed through human services

2013 NOHS National Conference Proceedings

Baltimore, Maryland – October 2013

Editor: Steve Cockerham, PhD

Assistant Editor: Megan Hrivnak, BS

Editorial Review Board

Cecil Blankenship, EdD

Mary Langenbrunner, PhD

Jamie Kridler, PhD

Teresa Brooks Taylor, MA

Alice Walters, ABD

Table of Contents

The "TMI" Aspects of International Human Services
Shoshana D. Kerewsky, Alivia Feliciano, and Ashley Brady 3

Human Services and Faith-Based Contributions
Alice Walters 11

The Role of the Human Service Professional in Improving Outcomes for Children and Families affected by Autism
Leanne Scalli 18

Single Black Custodial Fathers in Washington, DC: A Phenomenological Study
Brian R Feely 21

Facing "The Squeeze": Ideas for Successfully Managing Fiscal-driven Expansion of a Human Services Program
Karrie Patrice Walters and Shoshana D. Kerewsky 25

Mentoring in Online Doctoral Education
Alice Walters and William Barkley 31

The "TMI" Aspects of International Human Services

by Shoshana D. Kerewsky, Alivia Feliciano, and Ashley Brady

Abstract

As greater numbers of human services students engage in program-related international experiences, the need for adequate pre-travel orientation becomes more evident. In addition to standard orientation topics, such as visa and vaccination requirements, programs must provide opportunities for students to ask embarrassing questions in order to decrease their trip-related stress. We provide student-generated topics and questions, as well as anecdotes, intended to help faculty and staff open and guide these awkward conversations. We also provide a sample of online and print resources for both these and more general travel-related concerns.

Introduction

Increasing numbers of human services students are taking advantage of opportunities to study or engage in field study and internships in other countries. Our human service program's student advisory board recently identified the development and funding of more options for international experiences as a high student priority. Many schools and programs provide at least a brief overview for participants in these programs, and some provide extensive pre-travel training. However, these trainings often focus on rules and technical details associated with the trip. Many programs do not explicitly orient their students on the aspects of the trip that may raise the most anxiety and concern for students. These TMI, or "too much (overly-personal) information" issues, may include decision-making about sexuality, substance use, hygiene, and food. Broader topics such as sexism, racism, and homophobia are often unaddressed or noted but not discussed. Students need opportunities to pose questions about their fears in a safe environment, and ideas about resources they can use for their continued exploration.

Why "TMI" for international human services?

Students often do not ask these questions because they are embarrassed or believe their questions will be perceived as evidence of their ignorance. They worry about being seen as culturally or professionally insufficient by their faculty/staff and peers. Some students are afraid to make disclosures about their own health or mental health issues, while others are simply unaware of the circumstances that might provoke their concern.

Faculty and staff must take on the responsibility to make these conversations possible in order to ease students' acculturation and engagement with other cultures, increase their self-awareness, improve their general and multicultural competence, decrease risks, and increase their learning. In addition, answering or providing resources for answering TMI questions is arguably an aspect of informed consent. Students need to know to what they're really agreeing.

Whenever I (the first author) have offered a TMI talk for students about to engage in international internships, I have always drawn a large crowd, including undergraduates and

graduate students, students who want to share ideas and resources from their own travel, and students who have received more extensive briefing and want to share their knowledge (for example, students who have begun training for the Peace Corps or students with international military experiences). Students report anecdotally that attending a TMI discussion makes it easier for them to ask subsequent questions, talk realistically with their medical providers or parents, and attend to their safety while engaged in the experience. Faculty and staff report anecdotally that this experience makes it easier for them to anticipate advisees' and other students' concerns and build more information on these topics into their own interactions with students.

Many resources for orienting students to the logistical and technical aspects of the trip are readily available online, in travel books, from government sources, and from the university offices that manage liability and travel. Programs may need to develop additional rules and conduct expectations, due dates for paperwork and assignments associated with the trip, and trip-specific visa requirements or packing lists. While sometimes tedious, these are also generally straightforward and easily conveyed to students, who in turn find it easy to ask questions about these emotionally neutral topics.

Below we provide questions intended to open faculty/staff and student discussion about a variety of TMI topics suggested by my students, including the second and third authors. We hope that having a prepared set of questions will help faculty/staff to open a constructive and educational dialogue with students preparing for international travel. We also include several recent travel anecdotes as potential discussion stimuli.

TMI information: Representative examples to guide discussion

We are all more comfortable discussing a difficult topic when someone else has named it. It is important for faculty/staff to raise important issues that students might not otherwise raise for fear of ridicule, accusations of stereotyping, or being removed as a candidate for a trip. Putting the topics on the table is an important part of welcoming students to have a discussion about uncomfortable and personal topics.

Topics vetted or provided by students were categorized into a rhyming list of topics in the hope that faculty and staff who find themselves having an unplanned TMI travel conversation with a student will find a rhymed list easier to remember. The list, which is intended to provide a stimulus and is by no means exhaustive, poses conversation-starters as questions or statements to encourage student participation. It is followed by brief anecdotes provided for the same reason. We encourage faculty/staff to tailor both questions and anecdotes to the needs of their students, which may require changing, adding, or deleting some questions or vignettes. In addition, the group leader should be comfortable discussing these topics. The leader does not need to know the answers to all student questions, particularly if the student group includes some experienced travelers. However, the group leader should be able to guide students to resources that will answer their questions, either in the moment or as an assignment before the next meeting. A list of representative resources and search strategies appears below.

The questions are listed under these headings:

- Sex and drugs
- Chairs and prayer rugs
- Clothes and thugs
- Toilets and bugs
- Random ughs or shrugs
- Plus: “Don’t Touch the Monkey!”

Sex

- “Do I have to adhere to the culture’s gender roles and expectations?”
- “What does sexual behavior mean in this culture?”
- “Is it okay to come out as LGBTQ?”
- “Can I buy condoms there?”
- “What are the local sexually transmitted diseases?”

Drugs

- “Do I really need that injection?”
- “Do I really need to carry Cipro, Malarone, BCPs, etc.? Can’t I buy them there?”
- “Don’t antibiotics interact with BCPs? And what’s this I hear about becoming psychotic?”
- “Is it okay to buy beer if I'm in a country with a lower drinking age? Or at all?”
- “How do I find an AA meeting?”

Chairs

- “How will people respond to my wheel chair?”
- “Will I be able to navigate the sidewalk?”
- “I’m worried that people might react to my disability/physical difference.”
- “I’m freaked out by seeing people with disabilities begging.”
- “Can I buy medications there?”

Prayer rugs

- “Can I go to my own religious services?”
- “Can I go to local religious services?”
- “Do I have to bow to an image of the Buddha?”
- “What’s the deal with showing the bottom of my feet?”
- “Am I endangered by wearing my religious pendant?”

Clothes

- “Can I show a little skin? I see other people doing it.”

- “Why do I need to cover my elbows and knees?”
- “Is camouflage a problem?”
- “But everyone in the group/in my host family will see my panties hanging on the clothesline!”

Thugs

- “Do people really put drugs in your drink and rape or traffic you?”
- “Isn’t putting my wallet in my front pocket good enough?”
- “What if someone tries to extort a bribe?”
- “Can I take photos of that cool military complex/frontier/police officer?”
- “I was held at gunpoint some years ago.”
- “We watched two men on a train casing the unsecured bags of several unwary passengers.”

Toilets

- "How do I use a squat toilet?”
- “What’s a bidet?”
- “Where can I buy sanitary napkins or tampons?”
- “Can I move or stop my period?”
- “How do I dispose of toilet paper, sanitary napkins, tampons, and condoms?”
- “I’m left-handed. Why does everyone keep wincing when I eat?”

Bugs

- “Do they really spray the meat with Raid?”
- “Is it true I can’t drink the water? How about after a few weeks?”
- “What if I get really sick?”
- “What if my host family serves me food with eyes in it?”
- “Cockroaches make me scream!”

Random ughs or shrugs (a collection of additional topics for discussion)

- Vegetarianism/veganism/gluten-free/other dietary needs
- Personal space
- Racial profiling
- Panic attacks
- Hand gestures
- Machismo
- Child street vendors
- Body odor
- Public urination/defecation
- Halitosis
- Sweating

- Sunburn
- Tattoos and body modification

"Don't Touch the Monkey!"

- We include this final category as a reminder that inexperienced travelers often inadequately assess the danger posed by animals, whether in urban or wilderness settings. It is important to discuss why petting the puppy (or cat, or monkey, or lizard) may be problematic.

"I was in Barbados and accidentally drank the faucet water without thought in the middle of the night only to wake up with some harsh consequences."

"In England and Scotland, there were no toilet seat covers, and I had to plan extra time to go to the bathroom to create a toilet seat cover out of toilet paper (this does take time)."

"I suddenly had diarrhea. It was the weekend, and I was in an area that only had government buildings, so no restrooms were open. Pay attention to your environment! This was a traumatic experience."

"I was hiking Blue Mountain Peak in Jamaica a few years ago and was wearing a really crappy bra. Half way up (it's not a hard hike, but I was sweating profusely), I started to notice that my nipples were getting really sore from moving back and forth in my lacy/non-supportive bra. I decided the next best course of action was to just take it off all together. Well, this resulted in my chapped nipples bleeding thru my light teal tank top. Other hikers were horrified as they passed me on my way down for I had two shiny blood badges of honor on my chest. One old woman even cupped my breasts with the most pitiful look of sadness on her face."

"We saw a person who let a monkey sit on the back of her bicycle. Then, it climbed onto her head and tried to get her barrettes. It was a huge monkey up on her face, and she was just stuck there with this monkey on her until her brother threw something shiny on the ground. I was terrified just seeing it. If I'd been her, I would have flipped out!"

Making the TMI talk invitation for your students

As the preceding material should make clear, students have many questions and concerns about international travel. It is incumbent upon their faculty and staff to pose questions rather than hoping their students will generate them or be willing to ask. Frank discussion before the trip should result in lower stress, greater group solidarity, and fewer disasters for all concerned. Below are resources and search strategies for finding answers to both TMI and general travel questions.

Resources

- General travel sites with message boards or reader input.
    - Rick Steves: http://www.ricksteves.com/

    - Thorn Tree Forum (Lonely Planet): http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa
    - Trip Advisor: tripadvisor.com
- General country/topic information
    - Use Google or other search engine to search for country or area + topic (e.g., "Cambodia food")
- Toilets
    - Search country + toilet
    - Search country + how use toilet
    - Review websites, images, video (double check for appropriateness before providing links to your students)
    - From Head to Crapper—10 Varieties of Toilets Worldwide: http://www.redbeacon.com/hg/varieties-toilets-worldwide/
- Vaccinations and health
    - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/
    - Sexually transmitted diseases: Avert: http://avert.org/
    - World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs110/en/
    - Search country + disease
- Cultural knowledge
    - Books on history, culture, and etiquette include the Culture Shock! series and the Culture Smart series (e.g., North, 2005; Saunders, 2008)
- Country descriptions and travel warnings
    - CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/
    - U.S. Department of State: http://www.state.gov/ and http://www.state.gov/travel/

Annotated bibliography of useful readings

This bibliography provides representative additional resources for student and faculty exploration. It includes memoirs, responsible and ethical travel guides, and general student and volunteer materials.

Memoirs

Gelman, R. G. (2001). *Tales of a female nomad: Living at large in the world.* New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Gelman's adventures tend to provoke strong reader responses related to travel safety.

Gilman, S. J. (2010). *Undress me in the Temple of Heaven.* New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing.

Gilman's travel memoir provides a vivid depiction of her experience of increasingly difficult and frightening travel with a peer whose behavior grows increasingly inexplicable and alarming.

Pham, Andrew X. (1999). *Catfish and mandala: A two-wheeled voyage through the landscape and memory of Vietnam.* New York, NY: Picador.

Pham, whose family fled Vietnam when he was a child, chronicles his return, including his experiences of culture shock, hazing, and dislocation.

Swiller, J. (2007). *The unheard: A memoir of deafness and Africa.* New York, NY: Holt.

Swiller's Peace Corps memoir conveys not only his experience of being deaf while serving in Zambia, but also illustrates how not being careful about issues such as sexual mores and professional ethics can land a practitioner in very hot water.

Responsible and ethical travel

Popescu, L. (2008). *The good tourist: An ethical traveller's guide.* London, England: Arcadia Books.

Popescu discusses issues that, while useful to any traveler, are particularly relevant to human services students.

Steves, R. (2009). *Travel as a political act.* New York, NY: Nation Books.

In these densely illustrated essays, Steves recounts his own philosophical and political observations while traveling widely.

General student and volunteer materials

Lonely Planet (2007). Volunteer: *A traveller's guide to making a difference around the world.* Oakland, CA: Author.

Stone, S. (2008). *Volunteering around the globe: Life-changing travel adventures.* Herndon, VA: Capital Books.

While some schools have an international placements office and a protocol in place, others do not. For students organizing their own experiences, or faculty and staff planning a trip, resources on voluntarism may provide a starting point.

References

Kerewsky, S. D., & Barrett, E. (2011, October). *Preparing students for international human service opportunities*. Poster presented at the National Organization for Human Services Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas.

North, P. (2005). *CultureShock! A survival guide to customs and etiquette: Cambodia.* Portland, OR: Graphic Arts Books.

Saunders, G. (2008). *Culture Smart! Cambodia: The essential guide to customs & culture.* London, England: Kuperard.

Human Services and Faith-Based Contributions

by Alice Walters

Abstract

The economic downturn and reduction in social welfare benefits are current realities with widespread community impact. Meeting such challenges in human services requires reevaluating old standbys through innovative perspectives. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have a long history of providing social welfare services in the U.S. but research understanding their role has lagged. This essay provides an overview of the issues surrounding FBOs as a community resource in human service provision. Future recommendations include suggested research to address gaps in understanding local faith-based congregational social welfare provision. Further exploration of congregational contributions aims to improve human services by maximizing use of available community resources in social service provision.

Introduction

Economic challenges have tightened resources across the spectrum of human services. Decreased funding for human services negatively affects all communities. Impoverished communities sustain even greater detrimental effects when fragile community supports erode. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are often sole sustaining influences in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Cnaan, Sinha, & McGrew, 2004).

FBOs lend stability and familiarity through a supportive presence in the most distressed communities across the nation. Local congregational FBOs provided targeted outreach to growing ethnic and immigrant populations (Warren, 2009). I explore the role of FBOs in human service provision below, and follow with recommendations for further research to expand understanding of their contribution and operational processes.

Significance

"Doing more with less" is a common request of human service professionals in the current challenging economic climate. Reduction in government-funded social services is placing a greater burden on local communities for human service provision (Cnaan, Sinha, & McGrew, 2004). Human service professionals must critically assess available resources to supplement and complement their interventions.

FBOs are a source of community resources to achieve human service goals. FBOs have a long history of human service provision in the U.S., however, research on their contributions has been slow to develop (Graddy, 2006). The scope of FBOs demonstrates their significance as part of the human service network of resources. Religious institutions represent the greatest voluntary networks in America (Tirrito & Choi, 2004). There are nearly 300,000 estimated U.S. congregations with 80-90% providing some type of social service (The Association of Data

Religion Archives, 2000; Tirrito & Choi, 2004). Congregations remain a rich but little understood resource in meeting human services needs through social service provision.

Theoretical Frameworks

Community development theory contributes to evaluation of policy toward improved communities. Developmentalism is one community development theory that proposes managed pluralism of state, market, and community through coordinated efforts to improve a locality (Midgley 1995). The integration of resources from a variety of stakeholders can enrich and solidify community cohesion. Recognition and integration of FBO contributions in a broad network of human services provision is necessary to maximize their potential positive impact. Social capital theory is useful for identifying resources formed through social relationships and networks.

Putnam (2000) identified "bonding" (intragroup) and "bridging" (intergroup) types of social capital that organizations like congregations both generate and access. The dynamics of rich or restricted social capital influence the practical ways that organizations affect their environment. Developmentalism provides a framework for considering contributions from FBOs to increase social capital and build stronger communities. These theories frame an understanding of congregational roles in community social service provision.

Faith-based Organization Participation Patterns

Religious organizations have unique qualifications that allow them to contribute positively to human services provision. Patterns of participation are one such advantage. Religious organizations have a historical record of involvement with a variety of social movements in the U.S. (Morone, 2009). Cross-national examples in Britain and South Africa give evidence of wide applicability of religious contribution (Erasmus, Gouws, van der Merwe, 2009; Jawad, 2012). FBOs have served a particular function to aid disadvantaged ethnicities (Warren, 2009).

U.S. data have provided evidence of religious benefits in communities of Latinos (Popescu, Sugawara, Hernandez, & Dewan, 2010), Koreans (Boddie, Hong, Im, & Chung, 2011), and Blacks (Bent-Goodley, St. Vil, & Hubbert, 2012). FBO participation develops from their unique mission that values service to the marginalized. This aspect and local proximity has often meant that religious groups are sole supports in declining neighborhoods (Cnaan, Sinha, & McGrew, 2004). Client stakeholders often prefer congregational services to secular alternatives (VanderWaal, Hernandez, & Sandman, 2012). FBO characteristics include participation patterns and a variety of available resources.

Faith-based Organization Resources

The available resources of religious groups make for ideal consideration as part of human service provision. Cnaan, Sinha, and McGrew (2004) observed various capital resources held by congregations. Social capital networks, human capital in expertise and volunteers, and economic capital in budgets and buildings are all resources available for potential social welfare

participation. Organizational characteristics like holistic perspectives and informal programming flexibility also provide distinct advantages in specialized approaches to meet particular social service needs in communities (Cnaan, Sinha, and McGrew, 2004). Religious organization resources are components that may contribute to human service interventions in many communities.

International Context

Research exploring international context demonstrates the wide applicability of FBOs in human service provision. Religious contributions to human services remain complex and evolving with some nations relying more heavily on FBO integration. Formal inclusion of faith-based initiatives is present to a greater degree in some nations. Jawad (2012) found religious groups a part of the "Big Society" ideal in Britain. The "Big Society" has emphasized local initiative, volunteerism, and a decentralized government. Religious groups seem a natural contribution to these recent British political goals. The active involvement by ethnic minorities in local religious social action in Britain also deserves attention for cross-national implementation possibilities (Warren, 2009).

Researchers have also found FBOs important contributors to human services in developing countries (Flanigan, 2010; Griffith, Pichon, Campbell, & Allen, 2010). The success of FBO contribution to international human services is encouraging. Further cross-national research may examine the contributions of FBOs in additional national contexts.

Faith-based Social Service Provision

In the U.S., policy favorable to FBO participation in human services has increased development and recognition of FBO contributions. Trends in limiting welfare benefits and "work first" policies have dramatically reduced the safety net for the poor. Some have suggested local religious groups fill gaps in meeting welfare needs (Cnaan & Newman, 2010). Researchers have found that faith-based organizations often serve the most disadvantaged and minority populations (Brown, 2009; Reingold, Pirog, & Brady, 2007; Rogers, 2009; Shin, Eriksson, Walling, Lee, & Putman, 2011). FBOs have successfully participated in many identified human service areas.

FBO interventions include a large variety of interventions. FBO programs targeting HIV/AIDS and sexuality education are prevalent (Francis & Liverpool, 2009; Keikelame, Murphy, Ringheim, & Woldehanna, 2010; Landry, Lindberg, Gemmill, Boonstra, & Finer, 2011; MacMaster et al., 2007; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2011; Winer, 2011). Areas of faith-based research with demonstrated success among minorities include African American grandmothers raising grandchildren (Collins, 2011) and African American women and physical health (Duru, Sarkisian, Leng, & Mangione, 2010). Correctional setting programs (Cox & Matthews, 2007; Kwon, Camp, Daggett, & Klein-Saffran, 2010; Lane, 2009; Scott, Crow, & Thompson, 2010), orphans support (Currie & Heymann, 2011), and mental health initiatives (DeKraai, Bulling, Shank, & Tomkins, 2011; Leavey, Dura-Vila, & King, 2012) have also shown FBO efficacy.

There is wide divergence in the areas of FBO human service provision. Overall, researchers have found FBO success comparative to secular programs.

Recommendations

Research on FBOs and human services is still developing and presenting several areas for future consideration. Researchers are just beginning to identify what services FBOs provide for their communities (McGrew & Cnaan, 2006). Research gaps remain in understanding processes of congregational social capital development through human service provision. This knowledge has potential to improve the effectiveness of FBO efforts in their communities.

Understanding the process that FBOs use to provide human services may identify elements that both facilitate or form barriers to successful FBO programming. Several questions on FBOs guide future research. What are the types of social services provided by FBOs? How do FBOs make decisions about what human services to provide? What are congregational barriers to social service provision? What facilitates human service provision in FBOs? Additionally, are religious organizations making informed decisions based on community needs? Do FBOs assess what other services are provided in the community? Is there a need for collaboration by FBOs? Is there redundancy in service provision? These questions all require additional research to answer.

Research gaps suggest future qualitative research. The lack of research on congregational FBOs justifies the need for an exploratory qualitative approach. Multiple case study would allow for in-depth exploration of the complex decision-making processes of FBOs. Preliminary comparative evaluation across a typical case-maximum heterogeneity sample by FBO size would explore organizational size similarities and differences. The size of an FBO likely affects human service provision. Qualitative research exploring this aspect may provide valuable insight into provision and organizational processes.

Future FBO case study research might draw from data sources like stakeholder interviews, observation of board meetings, focus groups, member surveys, and archival documents for planned comprehensive data collection. Suggested is data analysis based on grounded theory's constant comparative method with open, axial, and selective coding of collected data. Proposed research findings on congregational FBO decisions and types of community service provided would potentially increase local church efficiency. Improvement in overall community functioning would be a resultant goal.

When human service professionals understand the process of FBO service provision more fully, it may lead to efficient use of important community resources found in local organizations. The ultimate goal of future research is to improve community functioning. Impoverished areas may benefit from understanding FBO processes better and promoting positive social change for disadvantaged members.

Conclusion

Historically, faith-based organizations have been the impetus for many social service interventions in U.S. history. They continue to provide vital community support in a variety of human service areas. In the most impoverished and isolated urban and rural communities, they are often a rich source of community resources. Their mission aligns them with a staying power to remain in communities when other members leave. Faith-based organizations serve a significant and enduring role in human service provision.

Research on faith-based organizations and human services has not matched their important contributions. Prevailing cultural secularization and origins of Marxist views that religion would eventually vanish made research into faith-based interventions unpopular for many years. It has only been in the last twenty years that faith-based research has grown into its own field. Observations of sustained religious influences promoted early research efforts. Research gaps remain in understanding the type and process of social service provision by local congregations. Religious organizations provide significant contributions in their communities that warrant continued research attention. Reductions in funding sources make ignoring the community resources in faith-based organizations an economic mistake. Exploration of the role of FBOs in human services requires further evaluation to maximize gains from these community stakeholders.

References

Bent-Goodley, T., St Vil, N., & Hubbert, P. (2012). A spirit unbroken: The black church's evolving response to domestic violence. *Social Work and Christianity*, *39*(1).

Boddie, S. C., Hong, P. Y. P., Im, H., & Chung, S. (2011). Korean-American churches as partners in community development. *Social Work and Christianity*, *38*(2), 395-416.

Brown, J. F. (2009). Faith-based mental health education: A service-learning opportunity for nursing students. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 16*(6), 581-588. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2850.2009.01421.x

Cnaan, R. A., & Newman, E. (2010). The safety net and faith-based services. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, *29*(4), 321-336.

Cnaan, R. A., Sinha, J. W., & McGrew, C. C. (2004). Congregations as social service providers: Services, capacity, culture, and organizational behavior. *Administration in Social Work, 28*(3/4), 47-68. doi: 10.1300/j147v28n03_03

Collins, W. L. (2011). A strengths-based support group to empower African American grandmothers raising grandchildren. *Social Work and Christianity, 38*(4), 453-466.

Cox, M., & Matthews, B. (2007). Faith-based approaches for controlling the delinquency of juvenile offenders. *Federal Probation, 71*(1), 31-37.

Currie, M. A., & Heymann, S. J. (2011). Faith-based orphan care: Addressing child-oriented goals and child rights in HIV/AIDS-affected communities. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 6(*1), 51-67. doi: 10.1080/17450128.2011.554579

DeKraai, M. B., Bulling, D. J., Shank, N. C., & Tomkins, A. J. (2011). Faith-based organizations in a system of behavioral health care. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 39*(3), 255-267.

Duru, O. K., Sarkisian, C. A., Leng, M., & Mangione, C. M. (2010). Sisters in motion: A randomized controlled trial of a faith-based physical activity intervention. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 58*(10), 1863-1869. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-5415.2010.03082.x

Erasmus, J. C., Gouws, A., & van der Merwe, W. (2009). Changing landscapes of welfare, religion and gender: The impact on the role of the churches. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 133*, 8-25. Retrieved from web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/jtsa

Flanigan, S. T. (2010). Factors influencing nonprofit career choice in faith-based and secular NGOs in three developing countries. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 21*(1), 59-75. doi: 10.1002/nml.20012

Francis, S. A., & Liverpool, J. (2009). A review of faith-based HIV prevention programs. *Journal of Religion and Health, 48*(1), 6-15. doi: 10.1007/s10943-008-9171-4

Graddy, E. A. (2006). How do they fit? Assessing the role of faith-based organizations in social service provision. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work, 25*(3/4), 129-150.

Griffith, D. M., Pichon, L. C., Campbell, B., & Allen, J. O. (2010). YOUR blessed health: A faith-based CBPR approach to addressing HIV/AIDS among African Americans. *AIDS Education and Prevention, 22*(3), 203-217. doi: 10.1521/aeap.2010.22.3.203

Jawad, R. (2012). Serving the public or delivering public services? Religion and social welfare in the new British social policy landscape. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice, 20*(1), 55-68. doi:10.1332/175982712X626770

Keikelame, M. J., Murphy, C. K., Ringheim, K. E., & Woldehanna, S. (2010). Perceptions of HIV/AIDS leaders about faith-based organisations' influence on HIV/AIDS stigma in South Africa. *African Journal of AIDS Research, 9*(1), 63-70. doi: 10.2989/160859 06.2010.484571

Kwon, O., Camp, S. D., Daggett, D. M., & Klein-Saffran, J. (2010). Reasons for faith-based correctional program participation: An examination of motive types. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 49(*6), 377-397. doi: 10.1080/10509674.2010.499053

Landry, D. J., Lindberg, L. D., Gemmill, A., Boonstra, H., & Finer, L. B. (2011). Review of the Role of faith- and community-based organizations in providing comprehensive sexuality education. *American Journal of Sexuality Education, 6*(1), 75-103. doi: 10.1080/073 70008.2010.547372

Lane, J. (2009). Faith-based programming for offenders. *Victims and Offenders, 4*(4), 327-333. doi: 10.1080/15564880903227271

Leavey, G., Dura-Vila, G., & King, M. (2012). Finding common ground: The boundaries and interconnections between faith-based organizations and mental health services. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture, 15*(4), 349-362. doi: 10.1080/13674676.2011.575755

MacMaster, S. A., Crawford, S. L., Jones, J. L., Rasch, R. F. R., Thompson, S. J., & Sanders, E. C. (2007). Metropolitan Community AIDS Network: Faith-based culturally relevant services for African American substance users at risk of HIV. *Health and Social Work, 32*(2), 151-154. doi: 10.1093/hsw/32.2.151

McGrew, C. C. & Cnaan, R. A. (2006). Finding congregations: Developing conceptual clarity in the study of faith-based social services. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work, 25*(3/4), 19-37.

Midgley, J. 1995. *Social development: The developmental perspective in social welfare*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Morone, J. A. (2009). Jefferson's Rickety Wall: Sacred and Secular in American Politics. *Social Research, 76*(4), 1199-1226.

Muñoz-Laboy, M. A., Murray, L., Wittlin, N., Garcia, J., Terto, V., Jr., & Parker, R. G. (2011). Beyond faith-based organizations: Using comparative institutional ethnography to understand religious responses to HIV and AIDS in Brazil. *American Journal of Public Health, 101*(6), 972-978. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2010.300081

Popescu, M., Hernandez, E. I., Dewan, S., & Luca Sugawara, C. (2010). Can government funding strengthen the third sector? The impact of a capacity building program on faith-based & community-based organizations. *Revista de Asistenţă Socială*, (4), 83-101.

Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling alone*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Reingold, D. A., Pirog, M., & Brady, D. (2007). Empirical evidence on faith-based organizations in an era of welfare reform. *Social Service Review, 81*(2), 245-283. doi: 10.1086/515832

Rogers, R. K. (2009). Community collaboration: Practices of effective collaboration as reported by three urban faith-based social service programs. *Social Work and Christianity, 36*(3), 326-345.

Scott, D. L., Crow, M. S., & Thompson, C. J. (2010). Tempest in a therapeutic community: Implementation and evaluation issues for faith-based programming. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 49*(1), 39-51. doi: 10.1080/10509670903435464

Shin, H. J., Eriksson, C. B., Walling, S. M., Lee, H., & Putman, K. M. (2011). Race, resource utilisation, and perceived need among urban community development workers from faith-based organisations. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture, 14*(10), 999-1012. doi: 10.1080/13674676.2010.545946

The Association of Religion Data Archives. (2000). U.S. Membership Report. Retrieved from http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/US_2000.asp

Tirrito, T. & Choi, G. (2004). Faith organizations and ethnically diverse elders: A community action model. *Journal of Religious Gerontology, 16*(1/2),123-142.

VanderWaal, C. J., Hernandez, E. I., & Sandman, A. R. (2012). The Gatekeepers: Involvement of Christian Clergy in Referrals and Collaboration with Christian Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals. *Social Work and Christianity*, *39*(1).

Warren, M. R. (2009). Community Organizing in Britain: The Political Engagement of Faith Based Social Capital. *City & Community, 8*(2), 99-127. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2009.01276.x

Winer, L. N. (2011). Sacred choices: Adolescent relationships and sexual ethics: The reform movement's response to the need for faith-based sexuality education. *American Journal of Sexuality Education, 6*(1), 20-31. doi: 10.1080/15546128.2011.547341

The Role of the Human Service Professional in Improving Outcomes for Children and Families affected by Autism

by Leanne Scalli

Abstract

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has created a new opportunity for human service professional to contribute to the well-being of children and families affected by autism. Human service professionals have the skills necessary to assist families within a medical home model framework. There is a need to educate human service professionals on how their participation in a medical home model can benefit children with autism and their families.

Introduction

Due to the rise in the prevalence of autism, there is a great demand for services for young children with autism. Current statistics indicate that one in 54 boys and one in 88 girls have an autism diagnosis (Autism Speaks, 2014). Medical conditions are often common in this population (Kogan, Strickland, Blumberg, Singh, Perrin, & van Dyck, 2008). A complex disorder such as autism requires a team of specialized professionals to work together to make the appropriate diagnosis. The medical home model has become a popular alternative to traditional medical models of care for the treatment of autism. Human service professionals would be an asset to the medical home model because of their training in service provision and advocacy. Including human service professionals in the medical model of care will improve outcomes for children with autism and their families.

What is a Medical Home Model?

A medical home model focuses on creating patient centered care. Physicians and specialists work together to manage chronic conditions ("Medical home model," 2013). The medical community is switching to the use of the model to care for those with long-term chronic medical conditions such as autism because the model is cost-effective. The medical home model also offers benefits to the child's family by reducing stress levels associated with efforts to coordinate medical care (Golnik, Scal, Wey, & Gaillard, 2012). The roles that human service professionals can play in the medical home model will be the focus for the remainder of this article.

The Roles of the Human Service Professional

Service Provider

Human service professionals are highly skilled in recognizing needs and seeking out the resources in the community for the child and the family. The internet is often the place where families find information on autism. With so much information on the internet, it is difficult for parents to sort out what is best practice (Sansosti, Lavik, & Sansosti, 2012). The human service professional can help the family to find information

on the internet that is empirically sound. This will save the family time and money, as they will be able to better discern the treatments and interventions that have the most likelihood of benefiting their child.

Human service professionals have the ability to pinpoint what is hindering the child and the family from moving forward. Having the ability to accurately assess the challenges and develop effective solutions will make human service professionals an invaluable member of the medical home model team.

Communicator

Traditional medical models of care for children with autism often result in parents feeling displeased with the care that their child received (Golnik et al., 2012). Parents often report that physicians do not understand how the disorder is affecting the family system. Human service professionals have the skills necessary to facilitate communication between medical professionals and parents so that the experience of accessing autism services becomes less stressful for caregivers.

Findings from Golnik et al. (2012) indicated that the implementation of the medical home model improved parent satisfaction ratings. The development of care plans and the coordination of external resources were some of the elements that enhanced parent satisfaction with the model. Human service professionals have the training needed to lead multidisciplinary teams in the creation of care plans for children with autism.

Advocate

Advocacy is an important responsibility for the human service professional in the medical home model. Children and their families will need the human service professional to advocate on their behalf in order to gain access to crucial services. The human service professional may need to advocate at the community as well as the national level in order to meet the needs of the child and the family. Their efforts may need to focus on changing the laws that inhibit the child and the family's ability to achieve their desired goals.

Human service professionals have an opportunity within the medical home model to work closely with the family to develop their advocacy skills. Autism affects the individual at all stages of the lifespan so teaching the family to advocate effectively is an important skill that will have a long-term benefit for the child and the family.

Educating Human Service Professionals

Laws, Parish, Scheyett, and Egan (2010) analyzed curriculum for social workers and found a lack of material related to individuals with developmental disabilities. Organizations dedicated to the field of human services should recognize the need to train current and future human service professionals on the needs of the growing segment of the population with autism. Graduate programs should incorporate hands on training working with children and families with autism into their curriculum. Organizations that provide professional development opportunities for human service professionals should consider offering trainings to professionals on incorporating their skills into a medical home model.

Conclusion

The medical home model provides a framework for meeting the complex needs of children and families affected by autism. Human service professionals are poised to play a role in the new model of care because of their training in advocacy and service provision. Graduate programs and continuing education programs should begin to provide trainings on autism and the use of the medical home model in order to prepare human service professionals for their role within the model.

References

Autism Speaks (2014). *CDC evaluates how DSM-5 may affect estimated autism prevalence*. Retrieved from http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/facts-about-autism.

Medical home model, if used correctly, offers proper patient care. (2013). *Corridor Business Journal, 9*(47). 13-17.

Golnik, A., Scal, P., Wey, A., & Gaillard, P. (2012). Autism Spectrum primary care medical home intervention. *Journal of Autism Disorders, 42*, 1087-1093.

Kogan, M. D., Strickland, B. B., Blumberg, S. J., Singh, G. K., Perrin, J. M., & van Dyck, P. C. (2008). A national profile of the health care experiences and family impact of autism spectrum disorder among children in the United States, 2005-2006. *Pediatrics*, *122*(6), e1149-e1158.

Laws, J., Parish, S. L., Scheyett, A. M., & Egan, C. (2010). Preparation of social workers to support people with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 30*(3), 317-333.

Sansosti, F. J., Lavik, K. B., & Sansosti, J. M. (2012). Family experiences through the autism diagnostic process. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 27*(2), 81-92.

Single Black Custodial Fathers in Washington, DC: A Phenomenological Study

by Brian R Feely

Abstract

Little is known about single, black, custodial fathers who are full-time parenting. The large majority of literature that focuses on single parents and single black parents concerns single custodial mothers. What about custodial fathers? The U.S. Census suggested that about 17% of single parent households are father only with children in the home (Census, 2010). A brief review of existing studies and why this study is important is presented. What does it mean to be a single, black, custodial father? A phenomenological study of single black custodial fathers, living in Washington, D.C. will seek to answer this question. Ten single, black, custodial fathers will be recruited to assist in study design and be interviewed. Phenomenology will be selected to provide rich data as these fathers tell their stories. The article concludes with limitations of the proposed study and recommendations for further research.

Introduction

Little is known about single, black, custodial fathers, even in large urban areas with a large African American population. Much of the focus today in the literature concerning child welfare and families is on single mothers and black single mothers. Fathers are often just a footnote in the context of child support or left out altogether. Occasionally, female members of the father's family are mentioned as possible resources for children in the child welfare systems.

Among black families, there is a stereotype of the disengaged or absent father, even if he is making non-cash contributions and wants to be part of his child's life. Yet, statistics tell us that fathers represent a significant percentage of single parent households. Data on the single father households will be presented further on in this manuscript.

Maternal preference and the "tender years" doctrine guided family court judges and social service agency workers when custody disputes arose. It should be noted that women greatly outnumber men in social service agencies, suggesting a possible gender bias. Society assumed females are intrinsically more capable and qualified to raise children, particularly females and young children of either gender. Occasionally, there was an unspoken but grudging acceptance of fathers taking custody, formally or informally, of older male children.

In the latter half of the 20th century, society has changed with respect to gender roles and expectations. The term "Mr. Mom", a somewhat tongue in cheek term, has made its way into common usage. This term is used to describe a father or other male filling the perceived or expected role of the mother, such as taking the children to school, medical appointments, and soccer practice. With the advent of the "Best Interests of the Child (BIC)" statute, family courts are legally bound to be gender neutral when considering decisions of child custody and living

arrangements. It should be noted that BIC is the law in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

So what constitutes the best interests of the child? No specific definition exists (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012); however, certain factors are considered by the courts to determine what constitutes the best interests of the child. Some of these factors are:

- Emotional ties and relationships between the children, siblings, and parents or caregivers.
- Physical and mental health of the parents
- Presence of domestic violence in the home
- Capacity of parents to provide a secure and nurturing environment, including food, clothing, and medical care.

By law, family courts are required to consider all of these points in determining custody arrangements (Childwelfare.gov, 2012). If this is the case, why is the percentage of single custodial fathers, estimated by the census Bureau, to be about 17% of all single parent households, relatively low?

Problem Statement: Many low-income, single, black fathers seeking or considering filing for custody of their child lack the financial resources and emotional supports and thus fail to develop a realistic child care plan to provide for the physical and emotional nurturing of their child in the event of a custody dispute.

Literature Review

There aren't a lot of studies on this population, which helps explain why we don't know a lot about single, black, custodial fathers. There are a few qualitative studies, primarily by R. Coles and conducted in the Midwest. A few, somewhat dated, represent seminal work in this area. None of these studies were conducted in large urban areas in the Mid-Atlantic region. I was not able to find any quantitative studies concerning this population.

The phenomenological studies reveal why single, black fathers become custodial parents. They want to be good parents and, in some cases, so their children do not grow up without a father, as some of these fathers did (Coles, 2003). Some of the fathers actively sought custody of their child, while others were less proactive but agreed to assume custody. Many of the fathers found purpose in life and even redemption for mistakes in their own lives, by taking on the task of raising their children.

In addition to the few qualitative studies, there were also a few legal articles that suggested some family court judges and social service agency workers (which are mostly women) may still harbor maternal preference or gender bias, rather than using BIC as the standard when custody decisions must be made. According to National Association of Social Workers study, social workers are 81% female and rising, with older male social workers retiring from the workforce (Center for Health Workface Studies, 2006). Do the female social workers ask mothers about the father and paternal family? If a name is given, do the workers

independently interview the fathers, or simply take the mother's word that the father is uninterested, dead, or incarcerated?

Research Questions:

- What does it mean to be a single, black, custodial father?
- What are the barriers that exist which discourage or prevent fathers from filing for custody (including joint custody) of their children? What are their strengths?
- What is the role of family court judges and social service agency workers in determining custody issues and is the BIC standard applied fairly and impartially?
- What services do social service agencies provide to low-income, single, black, custodial fathers and are these services comparable in quality and quantity, compared to the services that are offered to mothers?

Designing and Implementing a Phenomenological Study

The plan is to design a phenomenological study, consisting of 10 self-identified black or African-American single custodial fathers. Once the study has been approved, the author will seek to recruit 10 single, black custodial fathers living in Washington, D.C. and use various methods including purposive, snowball, and convenience methods to recruit study participants. Phenomenology was selected among qualitative methods as the most likely means of acquiring rich, thick data needed for a high quality study. I hope to achieve high quality interviews through multiple interviews, preferably in their home environment. Informed consent will be obtained prior to the interviews and pseudonyms will be assigned to preserve confidentiality.

The study participants may be biological fathers, step-fathers, or adoptive fathers, and must have at least one child less than 18 years of age in their care for a minimum of four nights a week. Custody may be formal or informal, and the fathers may have support in the form of family members, either in or out of the home, and community supports. He may be dating, but not living with a partner. There are no foreseen risks to the fathers, apart from possible transitory emotional discomfort while recounting the details of how he became the custodial parent. Mothers and children will not be interviewed.

Social justice is an important component of this study, so it is important to incorporate the fathers into the design of the study, so they are not merely subjects of a study but active participants of the study or research assistants. After the interviews, the fathers will have the opportunity to review the interview, check for accuracy, and add any thoughts they may wish to note.

Data Evaluation

After the interviews, the data will be coded and analyzed, either manually or by using a computer program for identifying themes and patterns. I will also be looking for differences among the fathers as well as similarities. For instance, do more fathers have boys, girls, or both? Are they younger children?

Summary

This proposed study would make an important contribution to the field of study in two ways. First, it would add to the fund of knowledge, by filling a gap in the research, as there are no existing qualitative studies among this population conducted in the Mid-Atlantic region. The second important aspect concerns social justice by giving these fathers a forum to tell their stories and voice their experiences while challenging stereotypes of non-engaged fathers, especially in the black community.

Because of the nature of qualitative studies, the findings are generally not transferable to other populations or geographical areas. It may be useful and productive to replicate this study in similar areas, perhaps Philadelphia or Baltimore, and compare the findings. At some point in the future a quantitative study should also be done.

References

Coles, R. (2003). Black single custodial fathers: Factors influencing the decision to parent. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, *84*(2), 247-258.

Center for Health Workface Studies. (2006). Licensed Social Workers in the United States, 2004. Retrieved from http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/fullStudy0806.pdf

Facing “The Squeeze”: Ideas for Successfully Managing Fiscal-driven Expansion of a Human Services Program

by Karrie Patrice Walters and Shoshana D. Kerewsky

Abstract

Undergraduate human service programs increasingly face two related and challenging areas of change: budget cuts and increased enrollment. We describe several potential strategies for managing these changes and use alternative class structures as an example, identifying several pros and cons for each potential solution. Our program’s experiences are used to suggest starting points for conversation in other programs.

Introduction

Many academic training programs in human services currently face the question of how to admit and serve more students with an increasingly tight budget. Under these circumstances, programs may struggle to provide a high quality learning experience. This presentation used examples from our human service program to demonstrate several potentially useful approaches to this dilemma, using alternative class structures as an example. Discussion questions are provided to stimulate discussion in programs confronting similar challenges.

It may be helpful for program faculty/staff groups to consider these questions:

- What kinds of pressure does our program currently face?
- What financial threats are we grappling with?
- How have these internal and external pressures impacted
    - Our student learning environment?
    - Our faculty/staff work environment?
    - Our program goals and values?

Our human service program opened in 1998 with 21 students in the major. For more than a decade, the program performed successfully using essentially the same structure as at its inception. A small faculty and low number of students meant high cohesion and relative ease of internal communication. Students were members of a junior- or senior-year cohort that took most of its classes together, with the notable exception of small, weekly group supervision meetings.

However, several years ago the ongoing national economic recession brought a new fiscal environment to the university, including significant budget cuts and pressure to increase enrollment, ideally without significantly raising costs. In this environment, and after discussions about the viability of an expanded program, we increased enrollment and hired some new faculty and staff over a short period. While enrollment had increased gradually from 60 students per cohort in 2003 to 90 in 2010, it now increased to 120 in only 3 years.

In addition to this increased student body, we also expanded through forging closer academic and administrative connections between existing substance abuse prevention training and service learning programs. Currently, our university offers several large pre-major classes and a new track serving Head Start teachers as well. These expansions strain program resources yet still occur in an environment of continued financial pressure.

The program has wrestled with these questions, which are likely to be common to any program that must grow quickly:

- How can we continue to keep the close "family" feel of the program with 200-240 students in the major?
- How can we maintain a close, highly-communicative faculty-staff group as we hire more instructors and potentially increase workloads?
- How can we ensure that faculty and staff continue to build strong relationships with students?
- How can we continue to identify students who may need assistance proactively?
- How do we ensure curriculum cohesion across classes and sections?
- How can we maintain our high expectations for student academic performance?

Faculty and staff in similar fiscal circumstances may find it helpful to consider how students' experiences in their programs may remain similar over time despite these changes, or might differ, and which of these similarities and differences may have positive or negative effects.

Responses to problems associated with program growth

Our human service program has considered these issues extensively and identified a number of ways to maintain and build upon the positive aspects of the program even in a fiscally challenging context. Workshop participants at the 2013 National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) conference affirmed the generalizability of some of these strategies, suggested additional strategies, and in other cases identified interesting options that were not feasible for their programs at this time, given their own structural constraints. What follow are bullet-point summaries that identify areas for potential faculty and staff discussion and a menu of possibilities for addressing each.

How can we maintain a "family feel" with so many students and faculty-staff?

We identified a number of practices to retain or modify slightly in order to keep the experience of being in the program highly relational for both students and faculty-staff.

- Maintain an open door policy and welcoming atmosphere.
- Maintain weekly small group supervision (with graduate student assistants or community professionals as supervisors) in order to provide personalized training and monitor for ethical practice.
- Retain a cohort model of instruction with some adaptations (see below).

- Improve senior students' mentoring of juniors.
- Establish a student advisory board.
- Move from weekly to bi-monthly faculty-staff meetings, with smaller committee and task meetings every other week. However, continue weekly faculty-staff executive meetings to identify and discuss students requiring additional support so that a larger student body does not increase anonymity by decreasing consideration of each student's needs.

How can we retain a cohort model of instruction with increasing cohort sizes?

We experimented with offering classes in a range of classroom and instructional models. We have elaborated on these as an example of trying creative solutions with low to no cost within our current budget model. These included:

- A class with 120 students in one room.
- A class with 120 students in one room for two hours, plus several smaller one-hour topical breakouts.
- Two class sections with 60 students each, with different instructors and different content that meet the same competencies for each section.
- Two class sections with 60 students each, taught in adjoining classrooms, with two instructors co-teaching both sections by rotating through the sections (e.g., one instructor teaches skills to one section on Tuesday and the other on Thursday, while the other instructor teaches theory to each section on the alternate day).
- An online class for all 120 students.

Trying each of these options allowed us to evaluate their pros and cons, and to gather representative student feedback.

One classroom with 120 students.

- Pros:
    - The whole cohort is together.
    - Students have more opportunity to bond as a group.
    - One instructor in one class increases clear communication.
    - Students use the same material and have the same experiences.
- Cons:
    - Students can feel lost in a crowd.
    - Students receive less personal attention.
    - There are fewer opportunities for specific feedback on student skills practice.
    - Full-group activities may be limited.
- Representative student feedback:
    - *I loved this structure. It is nice to be able to connect with everyone in the cohort at least once a week. We are all in this together, and having a class with everyone together reminds us of this!*

    - *There were downfalls to having that large of a class size: No individualized attention, small group activities were more difficult, and not enough time for in-depth questions from everyone.*

A class with 120 students in one room for two hours, plus several smaller one-hour topical breakouts.

- Pros:
    - As above for the structure, but for a shorter full-group class.
    - Increased student choice for topical breakout class content.
- Cons:
    - Decreased clarity of work expectations and grading standards, and varied workloads across the breakouts.
    - Decreased clarity of communication between multiple instructors.
    - Enrollment caps mean that some students must register for their less-preferred breakout.
    - Breakouts must supplement content and competency requirements but cannot be used to meet them unless all breakouts meet the requirements.
- Representative student feedback:
    - *I like the unity in the large class, and then the ability to stay more on task and have deeper discussions in a smaller discussion group.*
    - *This was okay except that discussion sections were unrelated to the larger class. It would be better if the discussion sections were on the same topic so that people weren't upset about getting the section they wanted.*

Two class sections with 60 students each, with different instructors and different content that meets the same competencies for each section.

- Pros:
    - Smaller class size.
    - Increased personal attention.
    - Increased opportunities for bonding.
    - Increased opportunities for specific feedback on student skills practice.
    - Increased opportunity for topic or instructor choice.
- Cons:
    - As above for topical breakouts.
    - Different class contents used to meet competencies.
    - Differences between classes due to instructional style.
    - Differences in instructor's expectations.
    - Differences in content and activities.
    - Comparisons made by students in different sections may increase distress within the cohort.
- Representative student feedback:
    - *I really appreciated the ability to make a choice between two subjects. When we take so many of the exact same classes, it is nice to be able to*

choose something based a little more on personal interests and career goals than most of our classes are.
    - *I didn't like it as much because I felt disconnected from the rest of the cohort and the class expectations were so different.*

Two class sections with 60 students each, taught in adjoining classrooms, with two instructors co-teaching both sections by rotating through the sections (e.g., one instructor teaches skills to one section on Tuesday and the other on Thursday, while the other instructor teaches theory to each section on the alternate day).

- Pros:
    - Smaller class size.
    - Increased personal attention.
    - Increased opportunities for bonding.
    - Increased opportunities for specific feedback on student skills practice.
    - Decreased number of novel lesson preparations for each instructor.
- Cons:
    - Decreased clarity of communication between multiple instructors.
    - Student confusion about the relationship between the components of the class.
- Representative student feedback:
    - *(I liked the) higher level of interaction allowed in smaller classes.*
    - *We got a mix of content and approaches and got to work in small groups, which was nice.*
    - *I feel like sometimes have two professors co-teach a course can be confusing about expectations and/or the purpose of the course.*

An online class for 120 students.

- Pros:
    - Ease of course access.
    - Work may be completed when and where it is convenient for an individual student.
    - Clear expectations and grading.
    - The online format is a good fit for some students' learning styles.
- Cons:
    - Less personal attention and bonding.
    - Not an in-person cohort activity.
    - The format is not a good fit for some students' learning styles.
    - Lack of class discussion and immediate question-and-answer.
- Representative student feedback:
    - *This was great because we were able to go at our own pace and didn't have as long of days on campus.*
    - *Without an instructor in a classroom, there wasn't any more in-depth learning regarding the topic.*

Programs may wish to experiment with similar structural changes depending upon their flexibility, faculty preferences, and resources.

Additional topics for consideration

The descriptions above of classroom constellations and course construction illustrate potential solutions to one problem. Other areas we have identified as requiring discussion and strategies include:

- How to ensure curriculum cohesion across multiple classes.
  - How to structure our annual retreat.
  - How frequently to review our mission and goals.
  - How to efficiently evaluate and discuss program components, including curriculum, field studies sites, competencies, etc.
- How to maintain and strengthen communication and strong relationships between program faculty and staff.
  - How to support and include adjunct faculty.
  - How to hire and utilize additional staff to focus on student support.
  - How to build stronger relationships between faculty across programs in our department.

It is likely that programs will continue to face fiscal stresses and requirements to expand or downsize in response to economic conditions. We encourage faculty and staff to be proactive in identifying the specific pressures they are likely to face in order to generate potential solutions that preserve the quality and integrity of their program. Early identification of potential solutions, with both faculty/staff and student feedback, will help programs to be flexible and responsive to external demands.

Bibliography

Kerewsky, S. D., & Lindstrom, L. E. (2012). Students in jeopardy: Facilitating student success in human services programs of the National Organization for Human Services, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Retrieved from http://www.nationalhumanservices.org/assets/Conference/2012%20nohs%20national%20conference%20proceedings.pdf

Kerewsky, S. D. (2006) *Embracing diversity: Challenges and strategies for human services training programs.* Workshop presented October, 2006 at the National Organization for Human Services Annual Conference, San Diego, California.

Lichtenstein, D. P.*, Lindstrom, L. E., & Kerewsky, S. D. (2005). A delicate balance: An integrated model for the preparation of ethically competent human services professionals. *Human Service Education, 25*(1), 27-39.

Mentoring in Online Doctoral Education

by Alice Walters and William Barkley

Abstract

Online higher education is a growing source of educational attainment for both traditional and nontraditional students. This research integrates rapid expansion of online learning with mentoring practices in graduate education aimed to increase student success rates. Presented are results from a qualitative case study analyzing one quarter of pilot data from an online doctoral mentoring forum. Major themes of student discussion included program processes, relational interactions, and professional development. Study findings increase understanding perceived needs of human services doctoral students. Implications of the research lead to increasing effectiveness of graduate mentoring and improved student success rates in online education.

Mentoring and Online Higher Education

The human service profession continues to face service delivery challenges in an era of expanding diversity accompanied by tightened economic resources. These conditions require human service practitioners with skills to evaluate past successes, apply ongoing evaluation, and implement interventions adaptable to emergent changes. In the United States, the recent economic downturn has highlighted workforce deficiencies including a shortage of trained workers, a lack of advanced professionals, and continued challenges engaging women and minorities in higher education (Sowell, 2008). Central to the mission of a prepared human service profession is the contribution of higher education. Higher education is a source developing professional leadership, broadening service expertise, disseminating current research, and contributing scholarship toward expanding the human service field.

Online higher education is now a significant contributor to higher education options. Online enrollments are increasing at a rate much faster than traditional higher education representing nearly a third of the total student population with continued growth expected (Allen & Seaman, 2011). The availability and flexibility of online education is providing higher education opportunities to previously excluded disadvantaged groups. Students enrolled exclusively in online graduate education are more likely to be non-traditional students including women, minorities, veterans, and those over age 30, employed, and supporting families (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Higher rates of minority enrollment add to the significance of online graduate education for increasing minority success and diversity in professional advancement.

Success rates in higher education continue to be problematic. Doctoral candidates represent the highest tier of professional attainment and an investment in future professional leadership. The crisis of degree completion at the doctoral level is significant. Substantial personal and social system losses occur when Ph.D. students drop out of their program. At present, nearly 50% of all Ph.D. students will not graduate across programs and course delivery formats (Sowell, 2008). The presence of such a high dropout rate is a significant social problem

affecting individual students, universities, and professions with national economic repercussions. Increasing doctoral educational success has the potential for wide ranging benefits but carries complexity.

Mentoring is emerging as a viable strategy for increasing retention in higher education and improving doctoral success rates. Mentoring has a history of broad application in many professions. Business, engineering, architecture, medicine, psychology, athletics, and education have all used mentoring as a foundation for professional development (Buell, 2004; Long, Fish, Kuhn, & Sowders, 2010). Mentoring has produced multi-directional benefits extending to faculty and entire university communities through positive satisfaction and retention outcomes for faculty and students (Long et al., 2010). Mentoring is emerging as an established practice warranting investigation for its complexities in graduate educational success. The body of literature on graduate mentoring contains studies exploring the role of mentoring in doctoral success, relational factors, participant perspectives, and the online context.

Mentoring in doctoral success

Academic success has been one of the primary goals of mentoring in higher education. The strength of the mentoring relationship is critical to doctoral success. Liechty, Liao, and Schull (2009) found a high quality faculty-student mentoring relationship strongly predicted doctoral completion. Related to doctoral completion is timely dissertation progress. There are marked stages of risk for increased doctoral dropout rates. Doctoral dropout rates vary from 59% within the first two years, 41% mid-program (years two to three), 32% in years three to five, and 17% after five or more years of study (Liechty et al., 2009). Mentoring relationships have potential to improve doctoral completion at critical stages of dropout risk through increased engagement. Students actively engaged in the academic environment were found more likely to continue to degree completion than less engaged students (Liechty et al., 2009). Mentoring may reduce dropout risk by targeting stages of increased risk and known student risk factors.

Student personality characteristics are one area significantly affecting graduate outcomes. Behaviors of self-sabotage including overcommitting, perfectionism, and lack of effort were detrimental to doctoral completion (Kearns, Gardiner, & Marshall, 2008). Positive mentoring relationships compensated for additional barriers to dissertation progress including self-criticism, self-doubt, procrastination, isolation, and disorganization (Liechty et al., 2009). Researchers have found negative student traits offset by positive student coping skills. Characteristics like high self-esteem, dependability, initiative, engagement, satisfaction, and motivation enhance mentoring relationships (Black, Suarez, & Medina, 2004; Liechty et al., 2009; Long et al., 2010). Graduate skills in critical thinking and content area mastery also influence graduate success and mentoring relationships (Black et al., 2004; Green, Hammer, Star, 2009). Mentoring relationships may help to mediate student weaknesses and capitalize on individual strengths to improve graduate success.

Mentoring is also a strategy to overcome deficits that impede diversity in graduate success. Many programs of study continue to struggle with increasing student diversity. Doctoral social workers were historically male until the 1980s but higher enrollments of women, minorities, and international students compared to other fields of study are a recent development

(Anastas & Kuerbis, 2009). The growth of diversity is encouraging but presents challenges. Women and minority doctoral students are disproportionally at-risk for doctoral completion across programs (Kniola, Chang, & Olsen, 2012). Compounding this finding is that students in human service related fields may differ from other programs of study by focusing less on academic performance concerns (Anastas & Kuerbis, 2009). Marginalized groups benefit from mentoring that addresses their unique needs (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, & Johnson, 2006; McAllister, Harold, Ahmedani, & Cramer, 2009; Wilson, Sanner, & McAllister, 2010). Mentoring holds promise for assisting disadvantaged students and achieving greater diversity in graduate education.

The presence of compatible faculty for mentoring diversity is also a barrier. Gender disparities still exist in academia with fewer female faculty and those women occupying the lowest ranks of higher education hierarchy (Dua, 2008). The contribution of faculty role modeling to mentoring marginalized groups is significant (Humble, et al., 2006; McAllister, et al., 2009; Wilson, et al., 2010). It compels an equally diverse faculty and academic policies that encourage mentoring processes. In academia, mentoring has assisted reducing marginalization through promoting social justice advocacy and overcoming institutional barriers (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010; McGeorge & Carlson, 2010). Institutional support may vary for providing mentoring initiatives to assist students. Several researchers identified the central role of official administrative support in sustaining successful mentoring (Liechty et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2010). Broader systems issues contribute to the success of maintaining diversity through mentoring in graduate education.

The academic system affects doctoral candidates in additional ways. Doctoral success includes acculturation to the academic environment. Acculturation is a subtle aspect of the graduate experience. Graduate students must learn to navigate the “system” of academia. New graduate students may be unaware and oblivious to these system processes. Understanding unspoken academic processes contributes to doctoral success (Liechty et al., 2009). Academic socialization may occur in stages of discovery. Mohammed (2010) provided a case study exploring emotional and cognitive changes of graduate study. Seven stages evolving from interest, motivation, self-challenge, confusion, self-doubt, abandon, to synthesis emerged (Mohammed, 2010). Adler and Adler (2005) identified phases of academic socialization as including initiation, introduction, inculcation, incubation, and engagement. These studies support the idea that doctoral acculturation is a lengthy and complex process of varying stages. Successful graduate mentoring accommodates these variations in program study.

Doctoral acculturation includes aspects of professional development. Koblinsky, Kuvalanka, & McClintock-Comeaux, (2006) found professional development a distinct component of the graduate experience and conducive to mentoring influence. Professional development includes a wide range of activities beyond the academic course load for graduate students. Career aspirations and the realities of preparation for employment after degree completion are examples of student concerns. Some researchers have found disparity in the expectations and realities of post-graduate employment. Anastas and Kuerbis (2009) found that employment in academia has been declining for post-doctoral students while self-employment and positions in private industry and non-profits are on the increase. As graduate students navigate the disparities of job availability, they look to faculty mentors for experienced career

advice (Haggerty, 2010). Faculty mentors can mentor graduate students in the steps of career preparation sharing valuable lessons on strategic preparation for current employment realities.

Professional development extends beyond career preparation. Haggerty (2010) critiqued traditional professional development for graduate students for a singular focus on job related skill development. In fact, professional development addresses career planning but encompasses participation with professional organizations and research opportunities. There is an acknowledged tension between leadership roles as practitioners and scholars. Anastas and Kuerbis (2009) discussed the difficulties for practitioners to incorporate research skills in doctoral education.

Human service practitioners have traditionally struggled with aspects of applying research to their settings (Beddoe & Harington, 2012). Mentoring can assist students with challenges assimilating to these dual practitioner and scholar roles. Students with an academic mentor have increased publications, a higher rate of conference presentations, and are more involved in research activities compared to students without a mentor (Humble et al., 2006). These practical outcomes provide students with valuable experience as they develop graduate skills. Students have described gaining knowledge of their profession as pivotal in mentoring relationships (Wilson, et al., 2010). This indicates that mentoring can meet student needs for understanding the broader context of their roles as they move through their graduate educational experiences. Mentoring relationships serve a function for assisting graduate students in many phases of professional development.

Relational factors

Relationship is central to mentoring processes between participants. In doctoral education, mentoring has historically involved intense and extended interaction between mentor and mentee. The prevailing model of doctoral mentoring has been apprenticeship through formal relationships in the lengthy dissertation phase of doctoral study (Liechty, et al., 2009; Storms, Prada, & Donahue, 2011). Investigation of mentoring interaction has been infrequent. General observations have prevailed. Buell (2004) provided one of the few explorations of mentoring interaction classifying faculty-student communication patterns into cloning, nurturing, friendship, and apprentice models noting overlap and informal styles predominating. Researchers have examined drawbacks of the traditional apprenticeship model in doctoral study. At best, there are limits to faculty resources in successful pairs and at worst, negative mentoring relationships may have serious repercussions (Haggerty, 2010). Changes in mentoring relationships may affect the quality of interaction.

The mentoring relationship is not static. Humble, et al. (2006) found a relationship between mentor and mentee developed through collaborative interaction over time. Styles of mentoring interaction may change across time from early task orientation to later more collegial interaction between faculty and student (Long et al., 2010). The most successful mentoring relationships incorporate positive communication behaviors. Black, et al. (2004) found self-assessment, clear expectations, and flexibility to renegotiate shared goals characterizing positive mentoring relationships. The intensity of mentoring in doctoral education highlights the

significance of understanding its processes. Mentor and mentee perspectives contribute to this knowledge.

Participant perspectives

The contribution of both participants in the mentoring relationship is central to outcomes. Different goals and levels of satisfaction between mentor and mentee may complicate the relationship (McAllister, et al., 2009). Not surprisingly, student perspectives may differ from administrative and faculty perceptions of mentoring and academic success. Few researchers have examined faculty and student perspectives in the same context. Studies comparing student and faculty perceptions have found divergent views. Students valued narrow academic outcomes while faculty advisors concentrated on broader mentoring objectives in one formal mentoring program (Wilson et al., 2010). Students identified career guidance, psychosocial issues, and research direction as needed topics for mentoring (Dickinson & Johnson, 2000; Humble et al., 2006; McAllister et al., 2009).

Authors found mentees valued increased contact with mentors but mentors remained satisfied regardless of the amount of contact in another study (McAllister et al., 2009). Finally, research supports the importance of targeting mentoring to a student's level of ability. Authors found students dissatisfied with mentoring initiatives that were too basic but valued those that provided strategies at their current level of need (Brunhofer, Weisz, Black, & Bowers, 2009; Kearns, et al., 2008). Assumptions of student agreement with faculty perceptions appear unfounded and warrant further investigation into student mentoring viewpoints.

Research on the faculty role in mentoring is more prevalent than student accounts. There are wide differences in the way that faculty approach their mentoring role. Even highly motivated faculty mentors struggle with the time, investment, and practical strategies to adequately mentor students (Haggerty, 2010). Several researchers have provided qualitative case studies exploring faculty perceptions of mentoring. Correcting misconceptions of student self-efficacy doubts, misunderstood lines of authority, and under-valued educational experiences were the topics of one faculty's guidance (Haggerty, 2010). A multiple case study described common research interests, complimentary work styles, detailed project planning, and faculty advocacy for students as critical factors in successful doctoral mentoring (Storms et al., 2011). These studies provide some insight into the content of mentoring valued by faculty mentors. Researchers have explored identified topics of faculty interest in mentoring less than studies on faculty personality traits.

Many studies have examined characteristics of faculty mentors. The importance of student compatibility with a faculty mentor lies in findings that greater student satisfaction with a faculty mentor leads to a higher incidence of doctoral completion (Liechty et al., 2009). Dua (2008) used a 26-item scale to assess faculty "mentoring-friendliness" (p. 311). This author described faculty mentoring as personal support, offering advice, and providing professional development opportunities for students (Dua, 2008). Several researchers found faculty flexibility, proactivity, coaching, support, and challenging students helpful to mentoring experiences (Black et al., 2004; Bloom, Propst Cuevas, Hall, & Evans, 2007; Liechty et al., 2009). Lastly, researchers identify role modeling and academic guidance as faculty contributions

to mentoring (Bloom et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2010). It is apparent that the range of faculty mentoring behaviors and content provides broad options. Selecting appropriate mentoring options may become critical when online educational formats are considered.

Online Context

Graduate education in the online environment presents a unique mentoring context. Research is just developing in this area and findings are nominal. Columbaro (2009) reviewed literature on e-mentoring noting the need for investigation and paucity of evaluated initiatives. Online mentoring in nursing (Faiman, 2011), special education (Johnson, Humphrey, & Allred, 2009), management (Loureiro-Koechlin & Allan, 2010), health studies (Melrose, 2006), and physical therapy (Stewart & Carpenter, 2009) have been subjects of evaluation yielding promise as part of comprehensive mentoring strategies.

Educators likely require adaptation of traditional brick-and-mortar methods to facilitate mentoring for online students. McAllister et al. (2009) found email contact less satisfactory than in-person contact for mentoring relationships. Online education must clearly adapt. Use of technology and immediacy were methods suggested to provide relevant mentoring to a technologically savvy generation (Evans & Forbes, 2012). Student discussion boards in the online classroom are one method that has successfully facilitated positive and collaborative interaction in the online environment (Cox & Cox, 2008). Online discussion board dialogue is an inclusive strategy when instructional techniques use facilitatory methods.

Central aspects of successful discussion board facilitation have included accountability, collaboration, scaffolding tasks, engaging critical thinking, balancing accessibility with restraint, promoting peer interaction, offering challenge and support, and encouraging social interaction (Ajayi, 2010; Blackmon, 2012; Downing, Lam, Kwong, Downing, & Chan, 2007; Jarosewich et al.,2010; Lee, 2009; Lin & Yang, 2011). Incorporation of these aspects into online graduate mentoring formats provides potential for successful distance mentoring relationships. Assimilation of research on graduate mentoring and academic success, relational factors, participant perspectives, and the online context requires an integrative conceptual framework.

Conceptual framework

We base the theoretical foundations for this research broadly on an overarching systems perspective to merge the work of several social learning theorists. Systems theory emphasizes holistic, non-linear analysis of complex social systems. Hitt and Hamilton (1975) applied a systems orientation to educational processes highlighting individual roles in the larger mechanistic system. Social learning theory has expanded such person-in-environment conceptions. Both Bandura's (1977) social modeling and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development described the role of knowledgeable guidance in assisting learning. Lave and Wegner (1991) broadened social learning by identifying communities of practice with learning occurring between group members in a situational context. Systems theory, social learning theory, and communities of practice emphasize the dynamic nature of learning environments. Cyclical processes and mutuality of influence contribute to complex interaction in the online academic environment.

The conceptual framework of systems theory, social learning theory, and communities of practice set the stage for understanding graduate learning as a holistic process. Individuals interact within the unified and bounded system of academia. The communication is necessarily dynamic, fluid, and complex. This study aims to capture mentoring interactions as they occur. Vygotsky (1978) stated, “it is only in movement that a body shows what it is” (p. 65). In the same way, this qualitative case study explores student perspectives in the “natural” environment of an online discussion board. Discussion board comments represent mentoring interactions as they occurred. The study addresses several gaps in the literature.

Literature on graduate mentoring has investigated aspects of doctoral success focusing on student personality traits, issues of diversity, and acculturation factors. Mentoring research is prevalent on mentoring program evaluation (Haggerty, 2010; Henderson, et al., 2010; Koblinsky, et al., 2006; McAllister et al., 2009). Researchers have seldom explored the content and process of mentoring relationships relying instead on self-reported participant evaluations. Faculty views have dominated research on participant perspectives. Single case qualitative studies in specific disciplines leave opportunity to examine how findings relate to other programs of study. Lastly, mentoring research of online environments is sparse.

Scholars know little about barriers or facilitators of doctoral education and professional development from the human services student perspective. The current study addresses a gap in the literature for understanding online doctoral student views of the mentoring process. Findings may suggest successful mentoring strategies for students and provide faculty with insight into the student outlook of the online doctoral mentoring experience. We posed two research questions for this exploratory study:

RQ1: What are student perceptions of barriers to online doctoral education?

RQ2: What are student perceptions of facilitators to online doctoral success?

Method

The study methodology was a qualitative case study exploring the perspectives of doctoral students enrolled in an online mentoring forum. We used a qualitative approach to capture emergent themes in student perspectives underrepresented in mentoring literature. The current case study bounded investigation to the context of one quarter of online forum participation. We used secondary data of 12-weeks of discussion posts from the pilot mentoring forum.

The forum was non-graded, voluntary, and had no set requirements for discussion participation. Students could participate as much or as little as they desired, posting questions, introducing topics, and responding to peers and the faculty mentor. The forum introduction to students was a general description of an opportunity to network with peers and a faculty mentor on topics of doctoral student interest.

Sample

Fifteen doctoral students and one faculty mentor participated in the mentoring forum. Forum student participants were the first 15 respondents to an email invitation for voluntary participation in the forum. Doctoral students from the School of Counseling and Social Service in a large, entirely online, university received the emailed invitation. All students were in their sixth quarter of enrollment, one and a half years into their doctoral studies. The student ages ranged from 33 years to 63 years (M = 47.3 years). Student ethnicity included seven Black or African American students, six White students, one Hispanic student, and one ethnicity-unidentified student. Twelve female and three male students were forum participants. The GPA for forum students ranged from 3.67 to 4.0 (M = 3.76). The demographics of the forum participants broadly matched university-wide graduate student demographics.

The faculty mentor was a contributor to the pilot mentoring forum development. His position was core faculty and program director for the Human Services program within the School of Counseling and Social Services. His experience included extensive teaching as a core online faculty and over 30 years' experience in research, teaching, and consulting in human services.

Data collection

Materials included discussion posts from participants in one 12-week quarter of a non-graded pilot mentoring forum. Discussions included student interaction with their peers and a faculty mentor enrolled in the forum. The posts included 12 weeks of threaded discussions averaging ten pages of postings per week. A "Contact the Instructor" thread was available throughout the twelve weeks and produced forty pages of content. The weekly threads and "Contact the Instructor" generated 802 total comments coded for the study.

Researcher access to the forum allowed data collection. One researcher was the faculty mentor and the other researcher was a student in the forum. The university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) provided approvals for the study. We copied and pasted posts into a working document, removed student names, and assigned pseudonyms to protect student or faculty identification in data analysis.

Data analysis

We used qualitative data analysis with an inductive approach to discover emergent themes from the data. Two of the problems associated with qualitative data analysis are 1) large amounts of qualitative data that require extensive time to sort and 2) high risk of investigator bias creeping into the analysis. In this study, a two-phase analysis of data addressed both these concerns. The first phase of data analysis used a modified Affinity Exercise (Brassard, 1989) to generate themes and subthemes. These were cross-validated into summative categories through a second phase of inductive analysis.

We used the modified Affinity Exercise to code 802 discussion comments from one quarter of the mentoring forum. The Affinity Exercise involved several steps of data analysis.

First, researchers and three student research assistants met in the same location to sort posts into related groups based on similarities. Research assistants were not familiar with the study or its topic and no a priori category themes were available to assistants to guide analysis. This procedure limited introducing biased themes to the assistants during data analysis. Grouped themes and subthemes developed in a process that allowed new patterns to emerge inductively along with unique and non-conforming themes (Patton, 2002). Relating grouped themes to each other was the final step of the Affinity Exercise. Cross-validation of team member coding was an ongoing part of the analysis procedure. Each coder moved data to appropriate categories as often as necessary to arrive at consensus. Analysis continued until saturation and consensus occurred (Patton, 2002).

A second phase of analysis followed the Affinity Exercise. In a second level of coding analysis, we revisited the data and cross-validated initial coding categories for key themes generating broad summative categories. The two-phase process of qualitative data analysis reduced researcher bias by using research assistants unfamiliar with the study to generate initial themes and to avoid projection of researcher bias onto the data. The second phase of examining data for summative themes confirmed initial coding through cross-checking for substantive significance (Patton, 2002). The Affinity Exercise followed by cross-validation allowed emergent themes to develop from the data in a method that provided timely, thorough, and credible qualitative analysis.

Results

Content analysis of discussion posts resulted in three broad thematic categories. Table 1 summarizes the major themes and the subthemes for each category. Analysis of 802 coded statements produced the categories of program processes (50.5%), relational interactions (32.2%), and professional development (17.3%). Discussion of themes and subthemes follows below accompanied by illustrative quotes from the data (with some minor edits for clarity, e.g., typos).

Table 1. Summary of Themes from Mentoring Forum

Theme		**N**	**Percent of coded statements**
Program Process	Total	405	50.5
	Dissertation	193	24.1
	Residency	118	14.7
	Course questions	49	6.1
	Forum procedures	45	5.6
Relational Interactions	Total	258	32.2
	Personal peer interactions	97	12.1
	Faculty feedback	93	11.6
	Academic peer feedback	68	8.5
Professional Development	Total	139	17.3
	Shared resources	80	10.0

	Life balance	33	4.1
	Publishing & writing	21	2.6
	Career exploration	5	.6
Total coded Statements		802	100.0

Program processes

Program processes represented the largest percentage (50.5%) of coded discussion statements. Process statements were those concerned with successfully navigating the educational program and clarifying program procedures. These statements fell into the subthemes of dissertation (24.1%), residency (14.7%), course questions (6.1%), and forum procedures (5.6%). Discussion of the subthemes and examples from the data follow.

Dissertation. The largest percentage of program process content at 24.1% was dissertation comments. These comments addressed subjects like choosing a dissertation chairperson, forming a dissertation committee, selecting the dissertation topic, selecting research design, and using theory. The dissertation looms as a formidable challenge for doctoral students. Students explored discussion of the dissertation process by posing questions and offering feedback to assist with developing a dissertation plan. An example is a request for feedback on a dissertation research design:

> *I need direction please. What levels of measurement would be important for my study and why. How can I ensure content validity, empirical validity, and construct validity for this study? If any of the types of validity do not apply to my plan, what rationale could I provide? Please see my partial plan below.*

Students frequently explored dissertation topics seeking peer feedback. An example demonstrates a student's response to peer dissertation topic inquiries:

> *My suggestion would be to find what area of HIV you would like to address. As it was stated to me by one of my professors is that you cannot solve the problem in a dissertation but you can present factors that can assist the topic. I am doing Homeless Veterans. This is a large topic. I will focus on the programs and agencies service delivery method to address the gaps in service. It is very difficult to narrow it down. HIV/AIDS is a passion of mine. If I were tackling this difficult topic I would think of some of these questions: 1. Where do you want to focus? (United States, Africa, South America). Narrow it down to one specific place or subtopic. 2. Think about what you want to accomplish? Do you want to address factors, questions, lack of resources, lack of a cure? 3. Do you want to focus on economical or culture factors? I hope some of these points help you?*

Residency. Residency statements were the second largest subtheme of program processes (14.7%). These comments reflected concerns with the online enrollment institution's program requirement for periodic face-to-face residencies. Statements reflected on past residency experiences and probed future residency preparation and expectations. Residency

comments included expectations, specific requirements, feedback on experiences, and a comparison of face-to-face residencies with a newly introduced online "virtual" residency. A sample statement asked about residency assignments:

> *Have any of you taken a residency course and if so what is required on the course home page? I am a little unclear about if I am supposed to do the assignments now before I attend or are the assignments for when I get there . . . ? Any advice would be helpful.*

Many students sought general feedback on the residency experience. One student asked broadly about residency experiences:

> *I would like to hear what people found beneficial about the residencies they have attended thus far.*

A peer responded:

> *Everything!!!! Networking with students and professors, the sessions, the inspirational stories, being able to get lots of questions answers. I love residency and look forward to when I attend them. I have attended two so far, both in MN.*

Course questions and forum procedures. The smallest percentage of program process discussion comments were the themes of course questions (6.1%) and forum procedures (5.6%). Course questions directly addressed specific courses while forum procedures clarified the voluntary forum's expectations and processes. Students sought advice for specific courses as this comment illustrates:

> *Is anyone enrolled or completed RSCH 8200? I am maintaining a 100% now but we start SPSS in a few weeks and I am a tad bit nervous. I completed a few statistics courses in graduate school; however, SPSS was only used in one. Furthermore, I have been hired to teach statistics and research methods this fall at a local university and I want to have all of my bases covered. Any help will be greatly appreciated.*

A comment on forum procedures was:

> *I was wondering about registering for this pilot program for spring . . . Is this something we will be able to do ourselves . . . ?*

The subthemes of doctoral dissertation and residency experiences dominated the content of program process discussion in the voluntary online mentoring forum. Addressed less often were specific course questions and forum related content. Examples of student comments from program processes demonstrate the interactive nature of the forum. Thematic content was often the basis for developing participant relationships. This aspect becomes apparent by noting the next most prevalent theme: relational interactions.

Relational interactions

Relational interactions represented 32.2% of coded statements as the second most common thematic category after program processes. While nearly all discussion within the forum was necessarily interactive, this category captured direct replies from participant to participant. Personal peer interactions and faculty feedback were nearly equal in percent of coded statements at 12.1% and 11.6%, respectively. Academic peer feedback was slightly less common at 8.5% of coded comments. Below are examples of peer interaction, faculty feedback, and academic peer feedback themes from the data.

Personal peer interactions. The theme of personal peer interactions included statements that fostered relational bonds between students. These included sharing challenges, validation, encouragement, and supportive statements. One student expressed life challenges and research topic progress:

> *I was very disappointed that I was unable to be a part of the call last night, I am supposed to be on vacation but as of Friday the flu hit the house starting with my 3 year old and working its way to all of us. We are all still recovering. In the process of recovering, I have had some time to watch TV and was able to catch the Pregnancy Project on Lifetime a movie about a high school girl that faked being pregnant in high school as a social experiment for her senior project. It was based on a true story. There has also been a book about it which I am ordering. This has led me to go a different direction for a topic of interest, and I have been devoting time to researching teen pregnancy and stereotypes. I am hoping by the end of Feb to have a great deal of research completed and literature read on the topic so that I can start to establish gaps.*

Students often exchanged supportive comments to each other:

> *Thanks John!! It's nice to know I'm not alone.*
>
> *These are great tips that I have not tried yet. Thanks.*
>
> *I'm trying to juggle this with my two courses and I have a virtual residency coming up in January. But I can do it.*
>
> *YES YOU CAN!!!*

Faculty mentor feedback. The subtheme of faculty mentor feedback encompassed a wide variety of responses to students. These included statements facilitating discussion, critiques of student work, supportive comments, probing questions, and shared resources. Faculty discussion facilitation encouraged peer interaction:

> I *have stayed out of the conversation between Kim and Mark for a while hoping some of the rest of you would jump in. Please take a look at what they have been talking about.*

Faculty feedback provided professional advice and resources:

Another very important way to start is to submit presentations at local, state, regional, and national association conferences. This is a very, very important way to get your name out there and to build your CV. It also makes it possible for you to network and get involved in your professional associations.

Encouragement and support from the faculty mentor:

Amy, Just keep moving forward step by step. We are here if you want or need us.

Academic peer feedback. This subtheme occurred less often. The theme represented peer responses that provided feedback for student work. Assignment drafts and dissertation plans received evaluation and suggestions for direction and improvement from student peers. For example a peer critique of a prospectus draft:

Mindy, I have read your prospectus and appreciate you sharing it with us. I do not know much about your topic so I was left a bit confused by your goal, purpose and potential significance of research . . . Also in regards to your method, is this going to be achievable?

Peers also responded to general research direction concerns with tips:

Hi Bill, I won't pretend to be an expert on developing research questions but I guess I would start by asking you what is it we already know, or what is it that you believe we should know that the literature doesn't reveal. Or have you noticed any patterns that you haven't seen addressed in the literature . . . I'm not sure if those are the right types of questions to ask, but the goal is to shave it down to a specific problem that if researched, provides knowledge of the topic that was not already present.

The category of relational interactions was a rich theme representing a diversity of content and interactional discourse in the mentoring forum. Post length varied widely. Some posting discussions were marked with many short responses from peer-to-peer. Personal peer interactions often involved many exchanges between peers with short phrases of supportive encouragement. In comparison, faculty and academic peer feedback typically had fewer but more lengthy postings. Students were less likely to use the forum for specific peer reviews of drafted work and more likely to seek general advice for completing educational assignments. Analysis of relational interaction posts indicated that a foundational theme underlying forum discussion was the forging of relational bonds as participants interacted on topical content. Peer-to-peer and student-to-mentor relationships developed and progressed through increasingly extensive exchanges as the quarter-based forum proceeded. Relational interactions appeared to form an undergirding structure supporting many of the content-based discussions.

Professional development

Professional development was the theme least addressed in coded discussion posts representing 17.3% of postings. The professional development theme included topics of broad

interest in expanding professional experience, considering career options, and preparing for academic and professional leadership roles. Shared resources was the largest subtheme (10%) followed by life balance comments (4.1%), and the fewest posts found in publishing and writing (2.6%) and career exploration (0.6%). Qualitative data follows illustrating the professional development subthemes of shared resources, life balance, publishing and writing, and career exploration.

Shared resources. The most frequent subtheme of professional development at 10% of postings was shared resources. These posts provided specific references to a resource related to professional development. Resources included primarily external referrals to professional organizations, upcoming conferences, research databases, books, articles, and websites. Participants also shared internal university resources available with student enrollment at the university. Students supplied information on conferences and professional organizations:

> *Here's some information I found on abstracts, learning objectives, presentation descriptions, and bios from an up-coming conference.*
>
> *I would recommend joining this organization. The cost is reasonable to join that national one and I would recommend joining your local one also, which is also reasonable to join. Not only do you have access to journals and newsletters, they also hold conferences.*

Websites were popular resources:

> *Thank you so much for the website you shared with the class. I will certainly use it in the future.*

An example of an internal resource accessed from student university login accompanied by a tip for further resources:

> *Have you checked the Mental Measurements Yearbook? It's listed on the library website and has a lot of standard measurement instruments. Also, sometimes the articles in your literature search will describe the measurements they have used.*

Life balance. Life balance was the second most common theme in professional development representing 4.1% of coded statements. This theme captured aspects of balancing educational requirements with a variety of life issues. Time management, personal responsibilities, work challenges, and burnout were all topics of discussion. These postings generated significant length in both original posts and replies from peers. Here are some student exchanges on managing life balance:

> *Hello Everyone, I have been very busy with starting my new job and I am still trying to navigate and juggle working full time, school, and family. I am sure I will have it down in a couple of weeks, I hope. I have been finding it challenging to read articles related with my dissertation, my current class has no components that I can relate to my dissertation to use my research. What do others do to find time for everything?*

A student responded:

> *I completely relate to what you are going through. Like you, I work full time, attend school full time (3 classes per quarter) and have a family. Additionally, my wife is enrolled in the DBA program and begins writing her dissertation this summer. It's all about balance but most importantly finding time for yourself and family. I am extremely lucky to have a job where I can close my door and read or write a paper. That saves me a lot of time…especially considering I still have husband and daddy duties to attend. Devising a schedule to complete my school work helps tremendously, and as corny as it may sound, the wife and I even schedule alone time so we can hang out together. I believe that is the most important tip of all, spending time with loved ones!*

Another student posted:

> *After I had attended my first residency, I fell a little behind with my classes and had to get caught up. I was no sooner caught up when my niece went into labor and had her baby. She did this over the weekend and my two boys went to be with her. I was able to work on assignments but was also at the hospital most of the weekend, this put me a little behind. Now that I am caught up, I am hoping to be able to participate once again. Thank you for your patience and take care.*

And a response:

> *Sherry, I think we can all relate to such life events. Glad for such happy news and looking forward to hearing from you!*

Students addressed burnout:

> *Speaking of motivation, don't forget to mention the - not overwhelming yourself - portion because that was important, as well. As students, we can't afford to have burnout in our lives and work balance is important.*

Students also discussed specifics of time management:

> *Good point Brenda! I agree…pacing yourself and accurately assessing time commitments is an important part of being able to go the distance.*
>
> *I picked up a little book on time management at the used bookstore. It has some nice simple suggestions. Here's a few I liked: Analyze how you are using your time. Is the task necessary, appropriate, and efficient? It is necessary if it is limited to what is only essential (no more). It is appropriate if you should really be doing this task – could you save time by delegating, for instance? Lastly, is there a better way to get the task done more efficiently?*

Publishing and writing. This subtheme represented 2.6 % of coded posts. Publishing and writing addressed statements on general writing issues, improving academic writing, and suggested procedures for scholarly publication. Students struggled with academic writing and APA format posting questions and reflections:

> *I really enjoyed hearing the discussion on APA writings, and I am going to seriously think about taking a writing course. I especially liked hearing about where Julie is with her premise; this gives me a better understanding of how to write one and to prepare for my dissertation when that time comes. I wish everyone that is getting closer to achieving their dissertation the best of luck.*

> *…I am not the strongest writer (in a grammatical sense) however when we get feedback on our papers you are right it does focus on the APA instead of [evaluating] is this the content that you were looking for? I believe that the APA is very important as it could prepare us to be published researchers but I need the feedback in the middle/along the way. From my experiences, I have even gone as far to not post some of my initial thoughts because although I have retained the information, I often don't remember where it came from and since I can't cite it, I don't bother to post, which keeps many conversations from going in the forum in my opinion.*

Academic publishing generated comments like these:

> *I am not sure if this forum is the right place for this question, but here goes. I have come across a lot of articles that are written by professors and doctoral students. If I were interested in helping a professor with a research paper related to human services, how would I go about doing that?*

> *I am very interested in getting published. I have taken some steps to try to get published. I recently submitted an article . . . I am awaiting a response in regards to if it will be published. I have also looked at Journals that have published similar articles to my research and looked at their requirements for submissions.*

Career exploration. The subtheme of career exploration contributed the fewest comments (0.6%) in the professional development theme. These posts explored career planning and preparation for career advancement. Students discussed their career aspirations and uncertainties:

> *At this time I honestly don't know. I am still exploring possible job opportunities that a Doctorate can bring me in Human Services. I can say I am adding to my knowledge base at this time because I am not in a position and I am praying that financial aid carried throughout my entire program (as some of my cohort members have not been so lucky).*

> *Wow that is exciting, best wishes. It is nice to meet people from such diverse career backgrounds. I would also like to teach college courses in human services and/or counseling. I want to somehow use research to develop community programs and/or do consulting for existing community programs. For instance, I have worked with a lot of*

9th graders who have failed the 9th grade and 8th graders who are not ready for high school. I would like to develop a high school readiness program for the urban public middle school students . . . So I guess I want to do multiple things, but mainly use research to promote social change.

Even though my career goals are not defined (and maybe exactly because they aren't) I have always sought to keep my options open. Therefore, I strive to gain the widest possible experiences to prepare for the next stage of my professional life. I have never really wanted to teach (I have a huge fear of speaking in front of groups!). But now, I find myself wanting to at least begin to build that area of my CV in small steps.

Professional development included subthemes of shared resources, life balance, publishing and writing, and career exploration. Postings in professional development represented the lowest percentage of forum comments. Shared resources had the highest percentage of coded statements with many short postings directing to resources or helps. The time management subtheme similarly, had shorter posts. The length of posts in life balance and career development was longer and more developed by details than other professional development subthemes. Life balance elicited significant interest in original and reply postings. Professional development was a multi-faceted theme of student posts that encompassed a variety of practical discussion. It was apparent that compared to other themes professional development was less a priority for students based on the smaller percentage of postings.

Discussion

This exploratory case study provided valuable information on student perspectives in a voluntary online graduate mentoring forum. Content analysis of discussion posts identified the program process theme as most prevalent. It is interesting to note that these students were in their sixth quarter of study, one and a half years into their doctoral programs. The precedence of program process and particularly, dissertation interest indicates the preoccupation of students with this area of their educational program. Clearly, addressing anxieties and interest in the dissertation is a significant investment of mentoring efforts with doctoral students. Students appeared focused on shorter-term objectives related to program completion. Details for meeting program requirements were the most discussed in the forum. These findings have implications for longer-term student goals.

Professional development received the lowest percentage of coded forum statements. The bulk of these posts discussed sharing resources and managing life balance during doctoral study. Resources and life balance are again, shorter-range issues associated with successfully accomplishing doctoral education. Themes directed at longer-term goals in professional development received fewer comments. Publishing and writing, and career exploration represented the lowest percentage of postings. Students did not appear as interested in long-term professional development goals.

Relational interaction in the mentoring forum was a significant theme. Supportive statements of encouragement were common interactions. Faculty feedback was nearly equally engaging with a variety of statements directed to forum facilitation. Academic peer feedback

was the least common type of relational interaction. Students appeared to value online relationships through validation. There was less student interest in using peer feedback for critiques on assignments or student work products. Relational interactions seemed to form a structural foundation supporting the content that students discussed in the forum.

The research questions were addressed by noting the predominate themes of student forum postings. Student perceptions of barriers to online doctoral education appeared to center on difficulties understanding and completing program process requirements. These included a focus on the dissertation capstone. An open-ended mentoring forum addressing student questions, concerns, and educational strategies appears to facilitate the online doctoral experience. Students used the forum as a support through relational interactions with peers and the faculty mentor on a variety of topics. Study results indicated that assisting students with program processes and encouraging interactive support are practical mentoring strategies in an online doctoral environment.

Limitations

The study has several identified limitations. First, we had dual roles as both participants in the mentoring forum and as researchers. To minimize researcher bias, we conducted secondary data analysis after forum participation concluded. We also selected a modified Affinity Exercise with student researchers unfamiliar with the forum or research topic to develop thematic categories. We used a second phase of data analysis to cross-validate initial coding for substantive credibility. Our participation in the forum provided insight into coding decisions but may have also projected researcher bias.

Second, the study was exploratory with small sample limitations. The student participants were voluntary respondents who may differ from other non-volunteer students. The students were all approximately one year and a half into their doctoral studies. Students at different stages of their education may likely have differing perspectives. Student enrollment was in doctoral programs from the School of Counseling and Social Service of a large entirely online university. Other schools or programs and traditional brick-and-mortar university settings may have characteristics that distinguish from this study. These contextual constraints limit findings of the study.

Lastly, faculty mentor characteristics likely influence online forum discussions. Interjected prompts, the direction of shared guidance, and even the style of mentoring are areas of potential divergence by assigned faculty. It is likely that individual faculty influence forum interaction toward different outcomes. The limitations of this study suggest future research to expand on these qualitative findings.

Future research

Future research should continue to investigate student perceptions in mentoring. Mentoring remains important for fostering student educational success and engagement but complex dynamics limit current understanding. The online educational environment is growing, presenting unique challenges. Research comparisons of online mentoring with brick-and-mortar

educational settings may ascertain any differences between instructional formats. The role of faculty in the mentoring relationship requires further examination for influence on student perceptions. Exploration of mentoring differences through minority, gender, or international student experience remains a research need. Comparisons of students by educational level may also yield distinctions. Future qualitative studies may inform quantitative methodology to establish generalizable findings of student perspectives in online mentoring.

Conclusion

Online higher education provides opportunity for many human service workers to advance in the profession. The accessibility of the online environment has increased enrollments of disadvantaged groups assisting in goals for a diversified human service workforce. Doctoral education is the highest tier of educational advancement producing future scholars and leaders. Disadvantaged status and the challenges of an online environment may compound the hurdles of completing a doctoral education. The high dropout rate in doctoral education signifies the need to develop strategies to sustain students to doctoral degree completion.

This study's results fill a gap in understanding the mentoring perspectives of online doctoral human service students. Findings indicated student barriers in understanding program processes and identified facilitators of supportive interactions to inform future online mentoring. Study implications may benefit students in understanding the tendency to focus on short-term program goals and neglect longer-term professional development. Administrators and faculty may have insight into student concerns and potential areas of mentoring intervention. Human service practitioners may apply mentoring in a broad range of settings. The implication of considering mentee perspectives is a critical component furthering professional growth in many human services contexts.

References

Allen, I. E. & Seaman, J. (2011). *Going the distance: Online education in the United States 2011* (Babson Survey Research Group Report No. 9). Retrieved from Babson Survey Research Group website: http://www.babson.edu/Academics/centers/blank-center/global-research/Documents/going-the-distance.pdf

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (2005). The identity career of the graduate student: Professional socialization to academic sociology. *The American Sociologist, 36*(2), 11-27.

Ajayi, L. (2010). How asynchronous discussion boards mediate learning literacy methods courses to enrich alternative-licensed teachers' learning experiences. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 43*(1), 1-28.

Anastas, J. W., & Kuerbis, A. N. (2009). Doctoral education in social work: What we know and what we need to know. *Social Work, 54*(1), 71-81.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.

Beddoe, L., & Harington, P. (2012). One step in a thousand-mile journey: Can civic practice be nurtured in practitioner research? Reporting on an innovative project. *British Journal of Social Work, 42*(1), 74-93.

Black, L. L., Suarez, E. C., & Medina, S. (2004). Helping students help themselves: Strategies for successful mentoring relationships. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 44*(1), 44-55.

Blackmon, S. J. (2012). Outcomes of chat and discussion board use in online learning: A research synthesis. *Journal of Educators Online, 9*(2).

Brassard, M. (1989). *The Memory Jogger Plus+™: Featuring the seven management and planning tools.* Methuen, MA: GOAL/QPC

Brunhofer, M. O., Weisz, A. N., Black, B. M., & Bowers, C. (2009). Welcome to our world: Evaluation of a workshop to orient students to social work education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 29*(4), 383-399.

Buell, C. (2004). Models of mentoring in communication. *Communication Education, 53*(1), 56-73.

Bloom, J. L., Cuevas, A. E. P., Hall, J. W., & Evans, C. V. (2007). Graduate students' perceptions of outstanding graduate advisor characteristics. *NACADA Journal, 27*(2), 28-35.

Columbaro, N. L. (2009). e-Mentoring possibilities for online doctoral students: A literature review. *Adult Learning*, *20*(3/4), 9-15.

Cox, B., & Cox, B. (2008). Developing interpersonal and group dynamics through Asynchronous threaded discussions: The use of discussion board in collaborative learning. *Education, 128*(4), 553-565.

Crespi, T. D., & Rueckert, Q. H. (2002). Mentoring school-based careers in graduate education: Conceptual considerations and case illustration. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 19*(1), 113-131.

Dickinson, S. C., & Johnson, W. B. (2000). Mentoring in clinical psychology doctoral programs: A national survey of directors of training. *The Clinical Supervisor, 19*(1), 137-152.

Downing, K. J., Lam, T., Kwong, T., Downing, W., & Chan, S.. (2007). Creating interaction in online learning: A case study. *ALT-J: Research in Learning Technology, 15*(3), 201-215.

Dua, P. (2008). The impact of gender characteristics on mentoring in graduate departments of sociology. *The American Sociologist, 39*(4), 307-323.

Evans, R. R., & Forbes, L. (2012). Mentoring the" Net Generation": Faculty Perspectives in Health Education. *College Student Journal, 46*(2), 397-404.

Faiman, B. (2011). Overview and experience of a nursing e-mentorship program. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing, 15*(4), 418-423. doi: 10.1188/11.CJON.418-423

Green, W., Hammer, S., & Star, C. (2009). Facing up to the challenge: Why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes? *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(1), 17-29.

Haggerty, K. D. (2010). Tough love: Professional lessons for graduate students. *The American Sociologist, 41*(1), 82-96.

Henderson, T. L., Hunter, A. G., & Hildreth, G. J. (2010). Outsiders within the academy: Strategies for resistance and mentoring african american women. *Michigan Family Review, 14*(1), 28-41.

Hitt, W. & Hamilton, D. (1975). Humanistic model of educational management. *Battelle Monographs* (Jun), 8-15.

Humble, Á. M., Solomon, C. R., Allen, K. R., Blaisure, K. R., & Johnson, M. P. (2006). Feminism and mentoring of graduate students. *Family Relations, 55*(1), 2-15.

Jarosewich, T., Vargo, L., Salzman, J., Lenhart, L., Krosnick, L., Vance, K., & Roskos, K. (2010). Say what? The quality of discussion board postings in online professional development. *New Horizons in Education, 58*(3), 118-132.

Johnson, E. S., Humphrey, M. J., & Allred, K. W. (2009). Online learning and mentors: Addressing the shortage of rural special educators through technology and collaboration. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 28*(2), 17-21.

Kearns, H., Gardiner, M., & Marshall, K. (2008). Innovation in PhD completion: The hardy shall succeed (and be happy!). *Higher Education Research & Development, 27*(1), 77-89.

Kniola, D., Chang, M., & Olsen, D. (2012). Transformative graduate education programs: An analysis of impact on STEM and Non-STEM Ph.D. completion. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, *63*(4), 473-495.

Koblinsky, S. A., Kuvalanka, K. A., & McClintock-Comeaux, M. (2006). Preparing future faculty and family professionals. *Family Relations, 55*(1), 29-43.

Lave, J., & Wegner, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, L. (2009). Scaffolding collaborative exchanges between expert and novice language teachers in threaded discussions. *Foreign Language Annals, 42*(2), 212-228.

Liechty, J. M., Liao, M., & Schull, C. P. (2009). Facilitating dissertation completion and success among doctoral students in social work. *Journal of Social Work Education, 45*(3), 481-497.

Lin, W., & Yang, S. C. (2011). Exploring students' perceptions of integrating wiki technology and peer feedback into English writing courses. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 10*(2), 88-103.

Long, E. C., Fish, J., Kuhn, L., & Sowders, J. (2010). Mentoring undergraduates: Professors strategically guiding the next generation of professionals. *Michigan Family Review*, *14*.

Loureiro-Koechlin, C., & Allan, B. (2010). Time, space and structure in an e-learning and e-mentoring project. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 41*(5), 721-735. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.00975.x

McAllister, C. A., Harold, R. D., Ahmedani, B. K., & Cramer, E. P. (2009). Targeted mentoring: Evaluation of a program. *Journal of Social Work Education, 45*(1), 89-104.

McGeorge, C. R., & Carlson, T. S. (2010). Social justice mentoring: Preparing family therapists for social justice advocacy work. *Michigan Family Review*, *14*.

Melrose, S. (2006). Mentoring online graduate students: partners in scholarship. *Education for Primary Care, 17*(1), 57-62.

Mohammed, M. R. (2010). Don't give me a fish; teach me how to fish: A case study of an international adult learner. *Adult Learning, 21*(1-2), 15-18.

Monk, P. E., Irons, E. J., Carlson, N. L., & Walker, C. (2010). Mentoring: A safety-net for retention and tenure for faculty in institutions of higher education. *National Social Science Journal, 33*(2), 126-132.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sowell, R. (2008). Ph.D. completion and attrition: Analysis of baseline data. Retrieved from www.phdcompletion.org/resources/CGSNSF2008_Sowell.pdf

Stewart, S., & Carpenter, C. (2009). Electronic mentoring: An innovative approach to providing clinical support. *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation, 16*(4), 199-206.

Storms, B. A., Prada, M. J., & Donahue, E. N. (2011). Advising doctoral candidates to degree completion. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development, 23*, 85-92.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). The Condition of Education 2011(NCES 2011-033). Number and percentage of postbaccalaureate students in postsecondary institutions taking distance education courses, by selected characteristics: 2007-08

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978*). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, A. H., Sanner, S., & McAllister, L. E. (2010). An evaluation study of a mentoring program to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 17*(4), 144.