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09. Sociology

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Abstracts from the 2013 Oklahoma Research Day

Held at the University of Central Oklahoma

04. Liberal Arts

09. Sociology

04.09.01 Don't Leave, Stay in School: Developing a Predictive Model of Discontinuance

Maxwell Kwenda,

Cameron University

This study was conducted with the goal of providing additional insights on student retention using administrative data at Cameron University. The study delivers scorable measures of discontinuance using multivariate methods. Using Cameron University's administrative data collected on 774 students, this study found that remediation reduces the odds of discontinuance in later semesters. Students with higher GPAs have reduced odds of discontinuing school. Non-minorities have higher odds of discontinuance in the first semester; there are no significant differences between minorities and non-minorities after the first semester. Concurrently enrolled students stay at Cameron University for the first year and then have the highest odds of discontinuance. Based on these findings, the author recommends that Cameron University should use predictive analytics as part of the decision-making process associated with student retention. Models in this investigation have predictive accuracy ranging from 70% to 86%; this is more than chance occurrence. Discontinuance should be studied semester-to-semester because there are variables such as financial aid whose effects vary from one semester to the next. If discontinuance is systemic, future analyses should include the entire student population and as many available variables as possible. Qualitative research (e.g. focus groups and unstructured interviews) is needed to contextualize the findings of this study.

04.09.02 Greek Life and its Effect on Persistence of College Students: A Comparison of Inter-Fraternal Council/PanHellenic and National Pan-Hellenic Council

Patrick Harrel, Allen Arnold, Victoria Campbell,

University of Central Oklahoma

This study is designed to determine the correlation, if any, between Greek affiliation and student persistence from one academic year to the next. The relationship between student involvement and academic persistence will be addressed within both traditionally Caucasian and traditionally African-American Greek organizations. The purpose of this study is to focus on the relationship between social involvement, in the form of Greek affiliation, and academic success, as measured by persistence from one academic year to the next. The goal of this study is to determine if being a part of a fraternal (brotherhood) or sisterly (sisterhood) organization impacts the persistence of students at the collegiate level. To keep biases at a minimum, the study will include individuals from both the traditionally Caucasian fraternities and sororities and those from traditionally African-American fraternities and sororities. The participants in this study will come from students who identify themselves as "Greek". Greek refers to those who belong to a Greek-lettered organization belonging to Inter-Fraternal Council (IFC), Panhellenic, or (National Pan-Hellenic Council) NPHC. The survey that will be given will contain questions that pertain to persistence from one academic year to the next. According to Sutton and Terrell (1997) there was evidence shown that supported involvement within NPHC fraternities and sororities helps with the retention of their members in school.

04.09.03 Recidivism Reduction Programs in Vermont and Beyond

Elizabeth Maier,

University of Central Oklahoma

This research includes an extensive literature review of what programs currently work in reducing recidivism for adults, what programs might work, and what doesn't seem to work. Information regarding where each program was successful (urban, suburban, rural), how each measured recidivism, and program details are included. Cost information for programs is provided whenever available. Additionally results from a focus group of practitioners in Vermont are reported. The practitioners were asked what is or isn't working locally. The research also identifies what principles seem to be found in the successful programs.

04.09.04 Exiting the Life: Understanding Desistance From Methamphetamine

Shannon Jackson, Amanda Gautier, Elaine Bartgis, Emelia Chrisco, Kathryn Letourneau, Rashi Shukla,

University of Central Oklahoma

Methamphetamine is one of the most serious illicit drug problems in the U.S. and internationally. Methamphetamine can result in devastating consequences to those who become heavily involved in the lifestyle that accompanies addiction. Little is known about the pathways out of involvement with methamphetamine and challenges of transitioning out of the methamphetamine lifestyle from an insiders' perspective. This study examines how individuals with histories of extensive involvement with methamphetamine and manufacturing exit the lifestyle. Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with 33 former methamphetamine users. A majority of participants had histories of involvement with dealing/trafficking and manufacturing. While the individuals in this study escaped the methamphetamine-lifestyle, transitioning out was challenging and difficult on multiple levels. An insiders' perspective on the processes and factors that influenced desistance from methamphetamine and specific challenges that were experienced will be discussed.

04.09.05 Silent Victims-Children's Voices: An Exploratory Analysis of Children from Methamphetamine Homes

Kathryn Letourneau, Kathy Bell, Rashi Shukla,

University of Central Oklahoma

Methamphetamine poses major risks for children. Studies have examined child exposure to methamphetamine, health consequences, and physical and sexual abuse. Less is known about children's perspectives of their situations. The voices of children represent a significant gap in the literature. This study explores how children removed from methamphetamine homes understand and perceive their current situations. Qualitative data were obtained from forensic observation reports of children removed from their homes by law enforcement in a midwestern city. The sample consists of 107 children evaluated between 2001 and 2010. Children vary in their abilities to understand why they were removed from their homes. While children risk being traumatized due to the separation from a parent or caretaker, the data suggests that their experiences during police encounters can have a significant impact as well. There is a need to place children at the forefront of responses to the methamphetamine epidemic. Further research is needed on this understudied population, including identifying the long term impacts of these experiences on children's development and well-being. The social and environmental conditions that drug endangered children are exposed to may place them at greater risk for engaging in illicit drug activity and other deviant behaviors.

04.09.06 Demonic Possession: The Role View of the Self, Group Influence, and Ritualism Have on Those who are Dealing with Demons.

Jessica Smith,

University of Central Oklahoma

The purpose of this research is to explore possible social influences on the phenomenon of demonic possession. This research hypothesizes that the demonically possessed are people who have at least one emotional problem, that groups--such as deliverance ministries- can heavily influence the belief that one is possessed and once possession is established, rituals such as exorcisms, can help the possessed work through emotional issues and feel integrated into a group, even if the rituals themselves are not "curative." Data is from an omnibus survey of 340 students attending a mid-sized, public, metropolitan university in Oklahoma. Inferential and descriptive statistics are utilized to explore this burgeoning topic, and future directions for research are discussed.

04.09.07 Social Workers Assessing Social Issues

Kirsten Gothard,

East Central University

The purpose of this study was to assess how informed undergraduate social work students are about current social issues compared to professional social workers. A content analysis was conducted of a leading social work journal to identify the major social issues from the past five years. From that analysis the top fifteen issues were identified. A survey was given to social work students and professionals asking them to rank the top ten social issues. The study hypothesis was that professional social workers would be more informed of the leading social issues than social work students. With the findings it is hoped to identify any knowledge gaps within the social work curriculum and to measure the relevance of national publications to social work practice.

04.09.08 The Influence of Counseling, Memorial Services for Suicide Victims, and Friendships with Suicide Victims on Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts Among Adolescents

Shawna Ward,

University of Central Oklahoma

Individuals exposed either directly or indirectly to suicide have an increased risk of suicide (Suicide Prevention Resource Center 2004). This study used an availability survey, followed by descriptive analysis and regression analysis. A total of 331 UCO college students were surveyed. A Self-reported questionnaire was administered regarding whether or not the students had been exposed to counseling services following the suicide of someone they know, whether or not the students believed memorial services were beneficial for friends and family members of someone who has committed suicide, and whether or not the student or someone close to him/her had ever contemplated, attempted, or committed suicide. Regression results of this survey indicate a significant correlation between familiarity (i.e., family member or close friend) with someone who has attempted or committed suicide and suicide contemplation or attempts among the population surveyed.

04.09.09 The Process of Burnout in Community Mental Health Counselors

Alan Moore,

Cameron University

After almost four decades of burnout research, the process of burnout is still not clearly understood. This study utilized grounded theory to address this deficiency and provide a theoretical framework of transitional stages which captures the developmental course of this phenomenon as it is endured by community mental health counselors. Five distinct but related themes emerged which represent psychological phases the participants encountered as burnout progressed. These were vulnerability, inconsistent self, questioning competency, negative perspicacity, and loss of meaning. The results of this study indicate that this phenomenon is, to an extent, self-made through cognitive appraisals. The ongoing interplay between a demanding environment and burnout symptoms appears to be mediated by the nature of these appraisals which involve causal attributions and evaluating the significance of one's work. Burnout begins and is sustained by negative interpretations of job experiences and a persistent focus on causes which eventually lead to a profound loss of meaning. It is suggested that interventions to address this phenomenon consider ways to help counselors shift their focus from negative causal attributions to rediscovering the intrinsic value of their work through meaning-focused coping strategies. Newly emerging research and the results of the present study affirm the value of studying burnout through an existential perspective.

04.09.10 An Analysis of State Park Self-sufficiency

Hung-Ju Chien, Kao-Wen (Grace) Chang, Lowell Caneday,

Oklahoma State University

State Park System protects natural resources and provides natural-based recreation for all people. State Park System attracts an annual attendance of over 700 million which is three times more than the attendance of National Parks. In FY2010, there are 2,194 state parks in the United States and 2,121 state parks are in operation. However, with recent economic trends and budget short-falls at the state level, several state park systems have been directed to move toward self-sufficiency in operations. Self-sufficiency is that an agency is able to generate enough operating revenues to cover its own operating expenditures. Thus, the analysis of self-sufficiency focuses on the operating revenues and operating expenditures. The purposes of this research aim to investigate the state park self-sufficient status and to analyze financial structures of operating expenditures and operating revenue sources of State Park System.

04.09.11 Forensic Linking of Y-Chromosome DNA

Tina Rainwater, Michael Wilds,

Northeastern State University

This project examines the forensic applications of Y-Chromosome DNA that specifically target the male-specific portion of the human genome (the non-recombining portion of the Y chromosome or NRY) in relationship to clearing unsolved crimes. Such forensic applications are especially important in solving crime scenes where only a small amount of male DNA is present such as sexual assaults, burglaries, and some homicide cases. The poster will present a longitudinal analysis of forensic linking of Y-Chromosome DNA to unsolved crimes, and address current constitutional issues related to such forensic applications.

04.09.12 The Hyper-Fear and Shocking Accounts of Sexual Assault to our Brothers and Sisters in Arms

Pamela Mertens, Corye Stover,

Northwestern State University

This presentation presents statistics of claims, incidents and legal findings of sexual assaults occurring within the United States Military branches. The presentation will display statistics of victimization for both sexes, being that sexual assault claims have been made by both male and female service members. Military training and legislative progress in reducing hyper-fear and the actual number of sexual assault incidents will be displayed as well. Electronic links providing further information pertaining to additional research, legislative support and how to further educate oneself on how to avoid sexual victimization will be made available.