This dissertation consists of two articles. The first article presented is a literature review written to identify and review studies of depression, pregnancy, and social support published in the last 10 years. A total of 26 articles were included in the review. The main outcomes fell into three subsections (a) the association of depressive symptoms and social support, (b) couple relationships, depressive symptoms, and pregnancy, and (c) interventions and treatments for depressive symptoms during pregnancy. Overall, the literature review illustrated a positive association between low levels of social support and an increase in depressive symptoms reported during pregnancy and that partner support was a key component within the general social support construct. The second article extends current literature and is the first known qualitative phenomenological study conducted with couples experiencing depression during pregnancy. Couples were interviewed together and data was collected and analyzed according to Colaizzi’s phenomenological research design. The following five themes emerged: (a) Challenges and stressors associated with pregnancy and depressive symptoms (physical complaints, lifestyle changes, and tremendous financial pressures including work stress, transportation, and housing issues), (b) Pregnancy amplifies mood states (women who screened positive for depressive symptoms described symptoms that are associated with depression such as crying more, feeling more emotional, getting mad easier, and being more irritable. The male participant expressed confusion by the FEMALE PARTICIPANTS’s mood, which sometimes left them feeling frustrated), (c) Relationship dynamics that influence depressive symptoms (FEMALE PARTICIPANTS’s explained that when their partner is perceptive of their needs they feel better. They described that listening, offering encouraging words, respecting barriers, and just being there helped them. Whereas, instigating arguments through trigger words, seemingly harmless name-calling, approaching the FEMALE PARTICIPANTS when she wanted to be alone and vice versa were not helpful), (d) Pregnancy and the influence of depressive symptoms on relationship dynamics (Cohabitating couples seemed to be expressing a paradoxical view of commitment. They wanted to know their partner will always be there to help raise the child but not necessarily as a marital partner; female participants’ did express fears and concerns about being a single parent. They doubted if their current relationship was strong enough to survive the transition to parenthood. This study revealed an uncomfortable level of insecurity and internal conflict, particularly for the FEMALE PARTICIPANTSs. They seemed unsure about whether to keep a certain emotional distance so as not to rely on someone that might not be there in the future. They wanted more signs of reassurance that their partner would be a part of their lives but also cognitively believed that it was best for them to not move to commitment hastily.), and (e) Reliance on external sources of support (most unexpected finding in this study was that all participants reported having good support systems and being provided with emotional and instrumental/material support from those around them for which they expressed deep gratitude. This finding is in conflict with previous studies indicating pregnant women with depressive symptoms will likely lack adequate social support (e.g., Adewuya et al., 2007; Jesse & Swanson, 2007; Rahman et al., 2003). One explanation for this dissimilar finding could be that in this study
it was not the other support persons that made the greatest impact on depressive symptoms but that of the partner. It may be that the couple relationship is more powerful than other significant relationships).

**Patrick Meadors (2008)**
**Major Professor:** Angela Lamson, PhD
**Title:** Secondary Traumatization in Pediatric Healthcare Providers: Conceptual Confusion in Literature

**Abstract:** This dissertation consists of two articles that will address very important theoretical and research aims. The first article provided in the dissertation is a literature review, which has the primary purpose of untangling the many concepts related to secondary traumatization. There has been an influx of research within the past decade on secondary trauma and many authors have coined separate terms that may be describing the same phenomenon with little or no regard for the overlap or uniqueness in the terms. While some researchers might argue that differentiating the terms (e.g., Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Traumatization, and Burnout) does not matter, we believe that it is essential to untangle these concepts and clarify the elements that are related to each of the concepts and as a result initiate a process that will allow future researchers to explore how each of the concepts are measured and further assess the relationships between the trauma related concepts. The second article focuses on how the terms post-traumatic stress disorder, secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout are similar or different in neonatal intensive care, pediatric intensive care and pediatric providers. More importantly, this study will be an extension of a pilot study conducted in 2006 that focused on the understanding of secondary traumatization within pediatric healthcare providers (Meadors & Lamson, 2008). Most of the research on secondary traumatization is focused on mental health providers and very little empirical research has focused on the impact of secondary trauma within healthcare and no known quantitative research (with the exception of Meadors & Lamson, 2008) has focused specifically within pediatrics. It is our hope that these articles will shed light on the neglected topic of secondary trauma within pediatric healthcare and eventually improve the culture and care for the carers on these units. In order to best care for our patients and their families, it is essential that we learn how to care for our providers.

**Janie Taylor (2012)**
**Major Professor:** Jennifer Hodgson, PhD
**Title:** The Shared Experience of Personalized Spiritual Care Services between Hospital Chaplains and Hospital-based Healthcare Providers

**Abstract:** The research highlighted in this dissertation offers contributions to both the implementation of and literature related to the biopsychosocial-spiritual (BPS-S) approach to healthcare, in particular as it relates to the spiritual care and support hospital-based healthcare providers (HBHPs) receive from hospital chaplains (HCs). Foundational insight into how to integrate hospital chaplaincy support and spiritual care into hospital-based healthcare delivery systems aligns well with the Institute of Medicine’s 2001 mandate to defragment our ailing healthcare system and reduce deficits in patient care. Moving past a myopic and strictly biomedical viewpoint of what is included in “patient care” invited investigation about the
systemic interplay between provider spiritual health and patient health outcomes. Even though HBHPs who participated in this phenomenological study appreciated the spiritual care received by hospital chaplains, and noted that they were able to provide better patient care as a result, they reported that the true value of the care did not appear to be recognized by hospital administrators. The lack of hospital chaplain inclusion on treatment teams in some units also raised questions about the need for a seamless and well-integrated hospital-based care delivery system. Participants in the study indicated that when HCs are not comfortable in certain units that they become more manualized and less personal. This serves to reduce referrals and HBHPs’ confidence in the HC service. However, according to the participants, it is HCs’ personalities and relationship building skills that gain them better access to patients and providers. Implications from this study are applied to clinical, research, and educational opportunities in the area of hospital chaplaincy.

**Ryan Anderson (2008)**

**Major Professor:** Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
**Title:** Medical Family Therapy in Cancer Care  
**Abstract:** This study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of seven patients and seven family members who received Medical Family Therapy (MedFT) as a part of their cancer care treatment. Participants’ narratives resulted in the formation of 3 thematic clusters that included how MedFTs are exceptional and necessary, kept everybody in touch, enhance patients' feelings of being cared for, and are persistent in offering help. The professional characteristics, strategies, and interventions that patients and families identified as helpful included the MedFTs’ personality traits, consistent presence, flexibility in location and timing, aid in communication and building relationships, and real-time intervention. Lastly, thematic clusters included areas for growth in MedFT that would lead this specialty toward becoming more fully accepted by the health care system with needed improvements in publicity, advertising, after hours services, and strategies for growing the profession.

**Lisa Tyndall (2010)**

**Major Professor:** Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
**Title:** Medical Family Therapy: Conceptual Clarification and Consensus of an Emerging Profession  
**Abstract:** The term Medical Family Therapy (MedFT) was coined in the early 1990s (McDaniel, Hepworth, & Doherty, 1992a) by a team of family therapists and a family psychologist. Since then there has been growing interest in MedFT, including the expansion of training programs and an increasing prevalence in the academic literature. While this growth is exciting, if MedFT is going to continue to move forward and gain credibility in the healthcare system, its practitioners, researchers, and scholars must first establish a common lexicon, that can thereby ground the MedFTs' professional identity, regulatory oversight, and scientist-practitioner models. The first article presented in this dissertation highlights the available literature on MedFT and identifies ways to further MedFT research initiatives and possibilities. The second article is based upon responses from an expert panel of MedFTs and includes an analysis of their perspectives on how MedFT should be defined, practiced, and taught. The first article is a non-
systemic literature review that illustrates the state of MedFT as well as reports on the similarities and differences present in its myriad of available definitions. Additionally, the article presents the theoretical foundation and skill set of MedFTs as found in the applied clinical literature and foundational research. Researchers who have studied MedFT interventions or incorporated MedFTs as interventionists in models of clinical care are also reviewed. Overall, 65 articles were reviewed and three distinct themes emerged from the process: 1) the inception of MedFT, 2) MedFT skills and applications, and 3) MedFT Effectiveness and Efficacy Research. During the review of these articles, variations in the definition of MedFT included or excluded concepts such as: collaboration, family systems, or the biopsychosocial perspective. These variations appeared to reflect the qualifications and educational background of the practitioners, the focus and generalizability of the research. Additionally, these variations will affect the future of MedFT as either an orientation to be practiced by a wide variety of professions or a profession to be licensed independently. Upon reviewing the literature and articulating the existing gaps, it is clear that the most salient need for future research is a cohesive definition of MedFT, quality science that demonstrates its effectiveness, and educational guidelines for those desiring to be MedFT practitioners. Therefore, three recommendations are made: 1) those with expertise in MedFT must reach a consensus on a definition from which practice, training, and research can grow, 2) the MedFT intervention framework must be strengthened through research, and 3) agreement must also be reached on a MedFT curriculum with which to train future practitioners and scholars. The second article is the results of a research study conducted to address two of the recommendations suggested in the literature review. A modified Delphi (Dalkey, 1972; Linstone & Turoff, 1975) study was conducted bringing together 37 panelists with MedFT expertise to identify the current definition of MedFT, its scope of practice, and educational competencies believed to be essential to those who practice it. After analyzing these data, we discovered that several of the foundational elements of MedFT discussed in McDaniel et al. (1992a) still hold true, including the importance of collaboration, the connection to marriage and family therapy as a parent discipline, and the overarching goals of agency and communion. The biopsychosocial (BPS) model (Engel 1977; 1980) also a foundational element of MedFT (McDaniel et al., 1992a), remained fundamental; however, the expert panel also argued for the inclusion of the spiritual dimension of health to be addressed. Panelists endorsed MedFT as primarily an orientation, a way of thinking; leaving it open to be practiced in a wide array of settings with a variety of conditions. However, some panelists also believed MedFT to be a developing profession. Also discovered was a general consensus for what a core MedFT curriculum would include. MedFT students should have a strong theoretical base and clinical skill set in family systems theory and the BPS framework, as well as comfort and skill working within medical settings and collaborating with medical professionals. MedFTs should be familiar with a variety of diseases, illnesses, disorders, and disabilities, as well as have taken courses in areas such as psychopharmacology, MedFT theory, medical culture and collaboration, and families and illness. Panelists called for MedFTs to be involved in the creation of healthcare policy, but also provide psychosocial support to medical professionals in an effort to help them to avoid caregiver burnout, compassion fatigue, and improve patient care. Recommendations for future research, clinical practice, and education in MedFT are offered.

April Hames (2010)
Major Professor: Mark White, PhD-former faculty member
Title: African American women with type 2 diabetes: A biopsychosocial-spiritual approach
Abstract: This dissertation consists of two articles written to address the context of type 2 diabetes care in African American women. In addition, the proposal and required Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation are included as Appendices. The first article is a review of the existing literature regarding the psychosocial and spiritual aspects of type 2 diabetes management and outcomes in African American women. The aim of conducting this review of extant literature was to identify what further research was needed specifically in African American women with type 2 diabetes as there is very little to date. The second article was written to identify and explore several demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual variables associated with type 2 diabetes control in African American women. A set of variables were found to predict diabetes control over time (hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c)), body mass index (BMI), and depression severity. The focus of type 2 diabetes management has been predominantly biomedical. With major disparities in morbidity and mortality and a growing disease burden, the psychosocial-spiritual context of diabetes is important to consider. For this non-systematic review, articles were found in Google Scholar, EBSCO, and reference sections of resultant articles. Search terms included —type 2 diabetes management,‖ —family‖ and —African American‖ and were set as follows: —type 2 diabetes management and family‖ and —type 2 diabetes management and African American‖. A total of 41 articles met inclusion criteria. Several factors associated with type 2 diabetes management in African American women were identified including: psychosocial support, socioeconomic status, culture, gender and sex, mental health, and spirituality. African American women’s health appeared particularly sensitive to family context and spiritual wellbeing. Culture, socioeconomic status, and mental health were also associated with their diabetes-related health outcomes. Future researchers should address the multiplicative influence of these factors specifically in relation to African American women and their diabetes management and outcomes.

The second article was written to report the biopsychosocial-spiritual variables related to type 2 diabetes management in African American women. A cross-sectional survey of African American women with type 2 diabetes (n=58) was utilized to explore demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual variables related to diabetes control (HbA1c). Associations between BMI and depression severity (PHQ-9) and demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual variables were explored. Participants were surveyed with the following scales: Diabetes Care Profile, Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), Family Crisis Orientation Personal Evaluation, Illness Cognition, Health Distress, and Basic Adlerian Scales for Interpersonal Success. BMI and current HbA1c were extracted from participants' medical records. According to hierarchical regression analyses, the biopsychosocial model tended toward significant prediction of the variance in HbA1c (Adjusted R2=0.10, p=0.06); the demographic and biopsychological model explained 27% (Adjusted R2=0.27, p<0.001) of the variance in BMI; and the demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual model explained 52% (Adjusted R2=0.52, p<0.001) of the variance in depression. Disability status was a significant individual predictor of BMI (β=0.32, p=0.02). Health distress (β=-0.34, p=0.01) and social/personal factors (β=0.34, p=0.03) were individually significant predictors of PHQ-9. A revised framework of biopsychosocial-spiritual factors may be more predictive of HbA1c and diabetes risk factors in this population. This warrants further investigation in efforts to improve type 2 diabetes management and outcomes.

2007
Keeley Pratt (2010)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: Medical Family Therapy Meets Childhood Obesity
Abstract: The dissertation is a compilation of two journal articles. The first article is a literature review that addresses integrated care for childhood obesity with consideration for clinical, operational, and financial practices. The purpose of the first article is to explore the evolution of pediatric care for children who are overweight by addressing: 1) terms, recent expert recommendations, 2) a structure for synthesizing clinical, operational, and financial practices, and 3) recommendations that bridge medical and other healthcare options for pediatric overweight patients and their families. The second article is an exploration of longitudinal systemic experiences of childhood obesity with children and their families who participated in research at the Pediatric Healthy Weight Research and Treatment Center. The purpose of this article is to identify changes in outcomes from initial visits at the PHWRTC to follow-up visits. In addition, we explored variables associated with or predictive of the variability in changes from the initial visits to follow-up visits. Outcomes for children and caregivers included: quality of life, depression, and relative body mass index.

Kenny Phelps (2010)
Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD
Title: Satisfaction with Life and BioPsychosocial-Spiritual Health among Underserved Patients with Diabetes
Abstract: The prevalence of type 2 diabetes continues to escalate, especially among vulnerable and underserved populations (CDC, 2008); however, the current landscape of literature has not kept pace with the trends of those most affected. Available data have often pertained to nonunderserved groups and only address part of patients' physical, mental, social, or spiritual lives. The literature review and research articles included in this dissertation integrate available knowledge pertaining to the comprehensive experiences of underserved groups with type 2 diabetes and specifically the understudied concept of satisfaction with life (SWL) among African American and Hispanic minority groups. The first article presented is a literature review written to synthesize studies of underserved populations with type 2 diabetes and specifically the understudied concept of satisfaction with life (SWL) among African American and Hispanic minority groups. The first article presented is a literature review written to synthesize studies of underserved populations with type 2 diabetes, including individuals who were of a minority ethnic group, socioeconomically disadvantaged, elderly, uninsured, and/or of lower educational level. The objective of this review was to amalgamate current evidence for underserved groups using a biopsychosocial-spiritual framework (Engel, 1977; Hodgson, Lamson, & Reese, 2007; Wright, Watson, & Bell, 1996). Themes and gaps in knowledge from approximately 1995 to the present were identified. Fifty-one studies were reviewed and grouped into three themes pertaining to overall health and disease management, including: psychological influences; marital, familial, and environmental influences; and spiritual influences. Researchers documented a number of psychological, social, and spiritual variables influencing glycemic control. In particular, depression and relational conflict adversely influenced glycemic control in some cases, whereas availability of social support or spiritual resources frequently assisted in better disease management. Lack of demographic data and attention to diverse groups, as well as, incomplete empirical knowledge prompt the need for further research of the influences of disease management among underserved groups. Three recommendations are suggested: 1) further exploration of the relationship between psychosocial-spiritual influences on diabetes management for uniquely underserved groups; 2) investigation of demographic differences or similarities; and 3) development and use of clinical models incorporating a multidisciplinary,
collaborative stance in addressing diabetes for vulnerable populations. The second article extends current literature and aims to meet a number of the above mentioned recommendations. This article is focused on two groups with noted health disparities, African American and Hispanic minorities with type 2 diabetes. It was written to examine associations found between biomedical markers of disease management and psychosocial constructs and assess the correlates and predictors of variability for SWL. Data were collected from 142 minority patients (65 African American and 77 Hispanic) during their first visit within a collaborative care program. Pearson product moment correlations, multiple linear regressions, and one-way analysis of variance were used to examine research questions in this descriptive, quantitative study. Only one weak, significant relationship was noted for BMI and somatization; otherwise, no noteworthy relationships were documented between psychosocial or spiritual constructs and biomedical markers of disease management (HbA1c and body mass index). Psychological distress, social support, and spirituality accounted for 63% of the variance in SWL for African American participants and 29% of the variance in SWL for Hispanic participants. Social support was the strongest predictor of SWL for African American participants, while psychological distress was the strongest predictor of SWL for Hispanic participants. Social support moderated the relationship between psychological distress and SWL for Hispanic participants, while social support did not moderate this relationship for African American participants. Spirituality did not moderate the relationship between psychological distress and SWL for either ethnic group. Clinicians and researchers who work with and study minority patients with uncontrolled type 2 diabetes may see improvement in patients’ SWL when screening for and treating psychopathology, interpersonal strain, and existential struggles. Attention to ethnic variation in research and clinical practice is important since dissimilarity existed in the determinants of SWL and moderators of psychological distress and SWL.

Kristen Dreyfus (2014)

**Major Professor:** Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
**Title:** Adult Attachment Theory and Diabetes Mellitus: An Examination of Healthcare Utilization and Biopsychosocial Health  
**Abstract:** Diabetes mellitus (DM) impacts hundreds of millions of individuals and their families around the globe. To explore the relational aspects of care and healthcare utilization two research articles were written: (a) a systematic literature review synthesized published research articles on diabetes and adult attachment theory; and (b) a descriptive cross-sectional study examined patient depictions consisting of relationship style, mental and physical well-being and healthcare utilization rates. The findings from the systematic literature review supported the need for additional prospective research focused upon diverse populations, and attachment style as the theoretical basis for understanding high utilizers of health care among patients with DM who experience barriers to quality health care. The cross-sectional study with a predominantly rural African American (AA) sample examined demographic, psychosocial (e.g., depression and social support), and behavioral data (e.g., primary care, specialty care, and behavioral health care utilization), by relationship style. There were 55 secure patients (37.2%); 21 fearful (14.2%); 13 preoccupied (8.8%); and 59 dismissing (39.9%). Compared to estimates of the general population as well as previous medical populations, the study sample consisted of slightly fewer secure patients, and slightly more dismissing ones. The findings showed most AAs were in the dismissing relationship category, which had the highest HbA1c values, yet reported the least amount of DM related distress. Preoccupied patients, who in previous studies tended to utilize
more healthcare resources than other relationship types, actually utilized the least amount of outpatient primary care and specialty care, but more behavioral health. This study supports the need for: (a) more research on attachment styles among diverse populations with chronic disease; (b) further exploration of the relational aspects of care to assist in the development of behavioral and psychosocial patient profiles; and (c) expansion of studies about attachment styles in rural settings where socioeconomic and access to care issues may be barriers to quality health care. Recommendations based upon findings from both articles are presented for future research, clinical practice, policy awareness and development, and for the field of Medical Family Therapy.

2008
Dan Marlowe (2011)
Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD
Title: Medical Family Therapy in a Primary Care Setting: A Model of Integration
Abstract: As the profession of marriage and family therapy (MFT), as well as the emerging sub-discipline of medical family therapy (MedFT), continue to grow and evolve within the current mental health care system, the arena of primary care presents an ideal environment for professionals who are relationally and systemically inclined. As such, this context is seen as a potential home for MedFTs hoping to provide integrated and collaborative health care. In order to address the unique practice based and cultural needs that manifest in medical contexts, the function of MedFTs in these sites must be apparent and accurately identified and described. Such a description is important not only to demonstrate the utility of MedFTs to potential stakeholders (e.g., physicians, medical staff, medical administration), but also to trainers who are charged with the preparation of future generations of MFTs and MedFTs for this type of work. The following dissertation seeks to address this issue from two interrelated venues: (a) to discuss how MedFT is connected to the profession of MFT in both conceptual and practical terms, and (b) to discuss a framework for integrated primary care, utilizing MedFTs, that does not service a targeted population.

Jackie Williams Reade (2011)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: The Clinical, Operational, and Financial Worlds of Neonatal Palliative Care: An Ethnographic Investigation
Abstract: In this focused ethnography the researcher sought to gain a multidisciplinary perspective on the cultural context of neonatal palliative care, including Peek's three world view of clinical, operational, and financial elements that impacted such care. The perspectives of thirty-six health-related professionals (pediatric clinical, allied health, financial, and operational staff) informed the identification of institutional cultural issues that affected the provision of neonatal palliative care at a tertiary care regional medical center. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews that explored the personal and professional experiences of study participants related to the care of dying neonates in general and the planning of a formal neonatal palliative care program in particular. Study findings revealed that participants experienced a tension between balancing intense emotional responses to caring for dying infants and their desire to be competent and compassionate care and service providers. Their experiences are influenced by the relationships with the patients, colleagues on their healthcare team, and contextual factors present in their medical institution.
Mary Lisa Pories (2014)

Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD

Title: The Lived Experience of Couples After Bariatric Surgery

Abstract: Obesity is a worldwide epidemic. Diet, exercise, and medical therapies alone have not been enough to stem the tide of this epidemic. Bariatric surgery has been found not only to be the most effective intervention for morbid obesity, but also results in substantial improvement in many of the associated co-morbid conditions. However, it is not clear what impact the surgery and subsequent life-style changes have on the patients' couple relationships. In order to explore the impact of bariatric surgery on the couple relationship, two research articles were completed: (a) a systematic literature review was used to explore existing research on the impact bariatric surgery on the marital/couple relationship and (b) a phenomenological study was conducted to explore and better understand the impact of weight loss surgery on the couple relationship. The results of the literature review demonstrated that very little is known on this topic. Of the published studies focusing primarily on the effects of weight loss surgery and couples, the vast majority of these studies were conducted between the years 1977 and 1991, with the most current study published in 2000. The more recent studies found that many couple relationships improved or remained stable after an initial adjustment period post-surgically. The research study revealed that the participant couples experienced the following five emerging thematic experiences: (a) changes in physical health; (b) changes in emotional health; (c) changes in eating habits; (d) greater intimacy in the relationship and; (e) the joint journey, where all couples felt their post-operative success was part of a joint effort. Recommendations from both articles are offered for clinicians, researchers, policy makers and medical family therapists.

Melissa Lewis (2012)

Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD

Title: Biopsychosocial Health of Military Members and Their Spouses

Abstract: Military members and their spouses experience unique stressors compared to civilian couples, making them vulnerable for physical, psychological, and relational health concerns. A systematic literature search, exhaustive search, cross-sectional study, and policy brief were completed to explore the biopsychosocial health of military members. Literature trends reveal that the role of the military spouse is no longer secondary, but is crucial to the health of the military and veteran couple. It is recommended that spouses be a part of the biopsychosocial assessment that service members receive and also be assessed themselves for stress derived symptoms such as hypertension, post traumatic stress, and depression. Assessments for health should occur sooner after deployment and at more frequent intervals given the dynamic nature of stress on health over time. The health of service members and veterans is couched within their personal and familial relationships, thus marriage and family therapists/medical family therapists are well prepared to attend to the dynamics between health, stress, and relational well-being across the lifespan of military and veteran couples. Recommendations for future research on military couples includes a need for couple-centered interventions using experimental methodology, a broader variety of interventions that target couples, and appropriate dyadic survey and assessment tools to determine the efficacy of couple's interventions for military, reserve, and veteran populations.
Matt Martin (2012)
Major Professor: Mark White, PhD- former faculty member
Title: Integrated Primary Care: A Systematic Review of Study Design and Program Characteristics
Abstract: Integrated primary care (IPC), the integration of medical and behavioral health professionals, is a viable part of the solution for the United States' fragmented health care delivery system. Over the past decade or so, efforts have been made to examine the theory behind and effectiveness of this health care framework. As researchers and program developers continue to examine the impact of IPC on patient populations, it is becoming increasingly important to highlight the study design and program characteristic trends of IPC to ascertain the next steps in research development. This researcher sought to identify those trends by using a systematic review design to examine studies of IPC. Of the two systematic reviews conducted for this dissertation, the first review includes information from 112 articles regarding study design, sampling procedure, patient population characteristics, treatment outcome, geographical setting, and psychosocial measurement. The findings of this review indicate that a majority of researchers examined depression outcomes using experimental designs and that the average participant in such studies was a Caucasian female in her early 50s. Moreover, the researcher found that almost none of the IPC programs were oriented towards family systems. For the second systematic review, the researcher extracted data from 76 of the 112 articles to examine the characteristics of each IPC program including communication practices, models, interventions, provider type, training and supervision practices, and setting. Findings from this review show that most IPC programs include psychoeducation, medication, follow-up contacts, psychotherapy, and at least one care management strategy as part of treatment but that less than half of researchers are reporting communication between providers and even fewer are reporting collaboration practices. Moreover, the findings indicate that a third of researchers trained and/or supervised behavioral health providers to work in an IPC program, and a fourth recruited nurses as behavioral health providers. Suggestions for future research include more diverse research methods and patient populations as well as a focus on increasing communication and collaboration between providers.

Christine Borst (2013)
Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD
Title: Parental Influences on Child Health Care Utilization in a Rural Population
Abstract: Children in rural areas experience health disparities above and beyond their urban and suburban counterparts. In order to explore the needs of children and their families in rural health care settings, two research articles were completed: (a) a systematic literature review used to explore brief interventions for use in pediatric primary care and (b) a descriptive cross-sectional study done to analyze the influence of parental biopsychosocial characteristics on child health care utilization. The systematic review revealed a considerable need for empirically supported biopsychosocial brief interventions designed for use with under-served, rural children and their families. The research study revealed a relationship between parent biopsychosocial characteristics (e.g., mental health quality of life) and child health care utilization (both acute and non-acute) in a rural southeastern community health clinic; relationships were also identified between child medical chart diagnoses (e.g., asthma, depression, obesity) and parental scores on
biopsychosocial measures. Recommendations developed from both articles are extended for clinicians, researchers, and policy makers who care about the needs of the rural and under-served children and families. Specific recommendations are also made for those who employ a relational lens to their research and who practice from a Medical Family Therapy orientation.

**Jen Harsh (2013)**

**Major Professor:** Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
**Title:** Medical Providers’ Views of Medically Unexplained Illness and Medically Unexplained Symptoms  
**Abstract:** Patients who present with medically unexplained illnesses or medically unexplained symptoms (MUI/S) tend to be higher utilizers of healthcare services and have significantly greater healthcare costs than other patients, which adds stress and strain for both the patient and provider. Although MUI/S are commonly seen in primary care, and the cost to both patients and the medical system is great, there is not sufficient information available regarding how providers can increase their level of confidence and decrease their level of frustration when working with patients who present with MUI/S. Through a systematic review of the literature and a qualitative phenomenological study, the goals of this dissertation were 1) to report on the qualitative and quantitative research literature regarding medical providers’ views of MUI/S, and 2) to discover medical providers’ experiences of caring for patients with MUI/S and the personal and professional factors that contributed to their clinical approaches. Results from these studies indicate that providers often experience a lack of confidence in their ability to effectively treat patients with MUI/S, as well as frustration surrounding their encounters with this group of patients. Additional resources that could assist providers in their ability to provide effective care and acquire confidence in their abilities to treat patients with MUI/S need to be developed.

**2011**

**Jonathan Wilson (2014)**  
**Major Professors:** Damon Rappleyea, PhD, and Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
**Title:** Healthcare Providers’ Experiences with Screening for Intimate Partner Violence Among Migrant and Seasonal Farmworking Women: A Phenomenological Study  
**Abstract:** Migrant and seasonal farmworking (MSFW) women experience greater levels of intimate partner violence (IPV) and have lower awareness of available resources than the general population. Although healthcare providers have the capacity to screen for IPV and provide resources to MSFW patients who have been victimized by IPV, most healthcare providers who work with MSFW patients choose not to screen for IPV. In order to develop a better understanding of the lived experiences of healthcare providers who serve the MSFW community and have encountered patients who have experienced IPV, two research articles were completed: (a) a policy brief designed to explore previous literature pertaining to IPV screenings in healthcare settings and to recommend policies that may help improve the detection, intervention, resources, and available science with respect to the MSFW population, and (b) a descriptive phenomenological study designed to capture the lived experiences of screening for and addressing IPV of nine healthcare providers. The policy brief revealed that (a) IPV prevalence among the MSFW community is higher than the general population; (b) awareness of resources among MSFW women who have been victimized by IPV is low; and (c) no studies have been published regarding IPV screenings of MSFW women in healthcare settings. The research study
revealed four emergent themes describing the experiences of healthcare providers who have screened for or addressed IPV among their MSFW women patients: provider-centered factors, patient-centered factors, clinic-centered factors, and community-centered factors. Implications and recommendations developed from both articles are extended for clinicians, researchers, and policy makers who care about the needs of members of the MSFW community who have experienced IPV and the healthcare providers who serve them.

Grace Wilson (2014)  
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD  
Title: Trauma, Coping, & the Couple Relationship: An Investigation of Pregnant Couples’ Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Health  
Abstract: Pregnancy and trauma are each complex biopsychosocial-spiritual processes with implications for the couple relationship, but there is not enough research on the ways that the two constructs are connected. Two articles were completed for this study: (a) a systematic review of literature published on the impact of traumatic stress on obstetric, neonatal, and postnatal outcomes and (b) a dyadic research study of couples' experiences with traumatic stress, pregnancy coping, and the couple relationship. The findings reported in the systematic review indicate that maternal trauma can impact maternal obstetric physical and mental health, fetal prenatal health, and maternal postnatal outcomes. The research study revealed that maternal and partner pregnancy stress, trauma, and relationship report are related, and discussed patterns of moderation and indirect effects between the variables. Based on these findings, implications and recommendations are provided for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who work with pregnant couples and trauma survivors. Finally, recommendations are made specifically for Medical Family Therapy researchers and practitioners.

2012  
Aubry Koehler (2015)  
Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD  
Title: Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Factors Impacting African American Patients Cardiac Rehabilitation Referral and Participation  
Abstract: African Americans carry a heavier burden of cardiovascular risk factors and have higher rates of death from coronary heart disease than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States, yet they are also less likely to be referred to, participate in, or benefit from Cardiac Rehabilitation (CR). In order to investigate the demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual factors impacting African American patients' referral to and participation in CR, three research articles were completed: (a) a systematic review of the literature regarding this topic; (b) a descriptive phenomenological study designed to explore the lived experience of seven African American patients recovering from cardiac events and/or surgeries; and (c) a policy brief synthesizing the findings from a systematic review of the literature and a mixed methods study to offer policy-, programmatic-, and individual-level recommendations to best support African American patients' recovery from cardiac events and/or experiences. The systematic review demonstrated a paucity of studies on the demographic and biopsychosocial-spiritual factors impacting African American patients' CR referral and attendance. The studies that were identified demonstrated that, among African American patients, there was a lower likelihood for CR referral, a higher likelihood of enrolling in CR with more cardiovascular risk factors, and a lower likelihood of CR participation and completion due to factors related to low socioeconomic
status. The phenomenological study resulted in six emergent themes relevant to the lived experience of seven African Americans (4 men and 3 women) who had experienced a cardiac event and/or surgery: (a) Participants valued medical providers' involvement during treatment and recovery; (b) Social support and participants' need for it changed post-event/surgery; (c) Participants' pre- and post-event/surgery experiences affected health outcomes; (d) Participants' sense of agency affected their life perspectives and health behaviors; (e) Participants experienced inconsistent referral to and utilization of CR; and (f) Participants' investment in faith was intensified or maintained. The policy brief emphasized the role of patients' education and income levels in their likelihood to attend CR. Recommendations for improving cardiac outcomes for African American patients in the rural Southeast included systematizing orders for CR on discharge paperwork, assessing and accounting for patients' levels of social support and spiritual resources, and coaching medical providers to reinforce treatment recommendations in a way that is understandable to patients and opens up discussion regarding potential biopsychosocial-spiritual barriers to implementing these recommendations.

Roberta Bellamy (2015)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: Latina Immigrants, HIV, and Their Experiences with Healthcare Providers in the U.S. and Their Home Country
Abstract: The intersection of factors associated with immigration in the Latina population and available culturally sensitive health care has not been well examined. There is a scarcity of research available that examines factors specific to the Latina population that contribute to HIV/AIDS education, screening, and care, despite the vulnerable state of Latinas for contracting HIV/AIDS. For the Latina immigrant population, perceptions of U.S. providers of patients in relation to encounters with providers from their countries of origin are important, and may influence subsequent patient and healthcare provider interactions, including potential for screening, education, and care in the U.S. Two articles were completed for this study: (a) a systematic review of literature presented on the efficacy for using Latino community-based organizations as a more culturally appropriate and effective way to raise the awareness of need for HIV information and screenings with Latinas, and (b) a community-based participatory research study, pertaining to sexual health education and screening of Latina immigrants. Based on these findings, recommendations are made for researchers, healthcare providers, and policymakers who work with Latina immigrants seeking or in need of HIV/AIDS education, screening, or health care.

2013
Francisco Limon (2016)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: Screening for Depression in Latino Immigrants
Abstract: Latino farmworkers experience depression at significantly higher rates than non-Latino Whites and usually they seek help for their mental health needs at primary care settings. Despite the high prevalence of depression in this population, primary care providers fail to detect the disorder in approximately 60% of the clinically depressed Latino farmworkers. Several depression-screening instruments have been translated into Spanish to address the mental health needs of monolingual Spanish speaking Latinos in the US, however the adequacy of these instruments is still unclear. The objective of this dissertation was to evaluate the effectiveness of
the Latino Farmworker Affective Scale (LFAS-15) as compared to the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Centers for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CESD-10), Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), and the DSM-IV Structured Clinical Interview for Depression (SCID) in accurately detecting depressive symptoms in Latino farmworkers. The LFAS-15 demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .925 (n=15), good convergent validity with the Structured Clinical Interview for Depression (r=.669, p<.001), and good sensitivity and specificity (AUC) of .939, SE=.024, p<.001).

Ashley Maag (2016)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: Attachment Based Treatment for Pediatric Obesity in Integrated Behavioral Health Care
Abstract: Pediatric obesity is a growing health concern afflicting the United States. Pediatric obesity, as a health epidemic, not only costs billions of dollars to our nation, but also negatively impacts the biological, psychological, and social health of individuals and families. Despite these negative consequences, most pediatric obesity interventions are only attending to biological causes and intra-individual concerns. However, researchers are increasing their focus on the role of parent-child relationships, such as attachment, in the reduction of pediatric obesity. This dissertation incorporates an attachment-based integrated behavioral health care model for pediatric obesity prevention and treatment and then test the constructs in the model, utilizing a survey methodology within an integrated behavioral health care context.

Irina Kolobova (2016)
Major Professor: Jennifer Hodgson, PhD
Title: Understanding the Needs and Quality of Life of Caregivers for Adolescents and Young Adults Diagnosed with Cancer
Abstract: Nearly 70,000 adolescents and young adults (AYA; ages 15-39) are diagnosed with cancer each year. Despite AYAs being identified in the late 1990s as a biopsychosocially distinct population from children and adults, they continue to experience stagnant survival rates and report complex unmet psychosocial needs. In order to explore the complexity of AYA patients’ unmet psychosocial needs, two research articles were completed: (a) a systematic literature review examined which demographic variables are associated with disparities in incidence and mortality rates, access to care, and unmet supportive care needs among young adults with cancer, and (b) a descriptive cross-sectional study examined the interconnectedness of distress and coping among young adults with cancer and their caregivers. The systematic review revealed that some groups of AYA oncology patients, including non-White patients, those without insurance and those who live in neighborhoods with a lower socioeconomic status, experience additional disparities with regard to incidence and mortality rates, access to care, and unmet supportive care needs. The research study revealed that there was a mix of caregivers who provide AYA patients support including parents, spouses, friends, dating partners, and non-parent family members and that coping and distress are interconnected among AYA patients and their caregivers. Results from both articles form the basis for recommendations intended for researchers, healthcare providers, and policy makers in their efforts to improve the biopsychosocial well-being of AYA oncology patients and their caregivers. Recommendations included the need for more dyadic and social network research designs, more clinical and research attention to the caregivers of AYAs, and increased training and education for healthcare providers who care for AYAs.
Meghan Lacks (2016)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: The Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Health of Active Duty Women: Service Members in Need of Service
Abstract: Given the growing number of women who serve in the military, it is critical that mental health clinicians, medical providers, researchers, and policy makers are aware of the unique biological, psychological, social, and spiritual health concerns of active duty women. A holistic approach to health and health care recognizes that the mind, body, and spirit are all relevant in the context of health and illness and thus essential to determining readiness and fit for duty. While the health of women veterans has received some attention in the research, a chasm exists in the literature on the biopsychosocial-spiritual (BPSS) health of active duty women. This dissertation includes six chapters, comprising an introduction to the dissertation, a literature review on active duty women's biopsychosocial-spiritual health, two publishable manuscripts: (a) a systematic review of research published on the BPSS health of active duty women, and (b) an empirical research study on the BPSS health experiences of active duty women, and a discussion chapter that offers future clinical, research, and policy implication to better serve this population.

Amelia Muse (2017)
Major Professor: Angela Lamson, PhD
Title: A Three World View Meta-Evaluation of Integrated Behavioral Health Care
Abstract: Integrated behavioral health care (IBHC), the simultaneous interface of medical and behavioral health care, is an emerging solution for the delivery of behavioral health in primary care contexts. While significant scholarship has been devoted to conceptualizing integrated care, little seems to be known about how IBHC is evaluated at the clinical, operational, and financial levels. This dissertation's intent is to evaluate IBHC according to those three levels as conceptualized by Peek's Three World view (2008). The success and sustainability of IBHC depends equally on the clinical, operational, and financial worlds of healthcare. This dissertation includes a systematic review on IBHC evaluation research, and presents the methodology and results from a survey distributed nationwide to 145 medical and behavioral health providers and administrators working in IBHC primary care settings. This dissertation concludes with research, evaluation, policy, and training implications and recommendations for measuring clinical, operational, and financial outcomes of integrated behavioral health care.

Daniel Blocker (2017)
Major Professor: Damon Rappleyea, PhD
Title: Coping and Chronic Illness: How Technology Moderates Couple Distress
Abstract: Type 2 diabetes (T2D) places considerable strain on patients, their families, and the healthcare system. To promote improved outcomes, it is necessary to assess psychosocial factors that impede or enhance T2D self-management. Through six chapters, this dissertation project sought to understand associations within the context of rural places of residence and integrated behavioral healthcare (IBHC) settings. The first chapter introduces the key psychosocial factors of interests and the organizational model used to guide the review and analysis. The second chapter is a publishable systematic review of the literature examining psychosocial factors of patients with T2D living in rural places of residence. Gaps found in the literature included the need for research that included multiple
psychosocial factors, better measures of social support, and measures of online support. The third chapter and fourth chapter include the literature and methodology that informed the original research in fifth chapter. The fifth chapter is a cross-sectional study examining the associations of psychosocial factors of patients within an IBHC setting. Significant findings included evidence of an association between support from children and improved T2D outcomes. The sixth chapter identifies future research direction, implications for clinical settings, and identifying a place for medical family therapists in this ongoing effort.