ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Perceived Stigma within the Mental Health Field as a Barrier to Treatment for Transgender Clients

STUDENT: Ashlee N Weining

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services

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The issues surrounding the needs of the transgender community regarding mental health services have received little research attention to date (Mizock & Fleming, 2011). The mental health field serves both as a gatekeeper for transgender individuals seeking medical care and as treatment for those struggling with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues due to minority stress (Budge, 2015; Meyer & Frost, 2013). However, there is not much empirical data regarding the experiences of transgender individuals who seek therapy services. The purpose of this study was to examine stigma within the mental health field as a potential barrier to transgender clients seeking treatment. Subjects were gathered via the internet and administered a survey asking them a series of quantitative and qualitative questions regarding their experiences in mental health treatment, any stigma they experienced from mental health providers, and their willingness to seek treatment in the future. It was discovered that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between a subject’s experienced stigma and their willingness to seek future treatment. It was also discovered that there were seven specific negative behaviors exhibited by mental health providers that impacted the subjects’ therapeutic experiences. This study offered insight into the quality of services provided for transgender clients and whether those services are meeting the needs of the transgender population.