

The View From Here:

Perspectives on Northern and Rural Psychology

Volume 2, Issue 2

January 11, 2008

Inside this issue:

It's a Small World	2
Call For Rural & Northern Representative	3
North Star Student Award	3
Ethics Column	3
Article: Understanding the mental health of rural families: Exploring the pathways from stress to intervention	4
Article: Parenting Stress and Maternal Depression in Rural Mothers: Preliminary Findings	5
Article: Collective control, cultural identity, and the psychological well-being of northern Manitoba Cree youth	6
Useful Links	7

Message From the Chair

Executive Committee Nominations

As you may recall, Dr. Cindy Hardy and Dr. Henry Harder were appointed to the positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Chairperson-Elect, respectively. At the end of the business meeting in 2008 Dr. Hardy's appointment will officially end and Dr. Harder and I will assume the Chairperson and Past-Chairperson positions respectively. As such, we are currently seeking nominations for the positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Chairperson-Elect. Nominations can be made either by email (dyckkg@cc.umanitoba.ca) or in-person at the Annual Section Business Meeting to be held at the upcoming CPA Convention in Halifax, June 2008. Assuming we have quorum, voting will take place at the business meeting.

Student Representative Position

As you may recall, there has been some discussion about adding a Student Representative position to our Executive Committee. This individual would be elected for a one-year term and have full voting privileges. I have surveyed other sections and would like to propose the following role description:

The Student Representative shall:

- Represent the interests of psychology students as they relate to the ongoing initiatives of the section.
- Be an active participant in the section's decision making process, paying particular attention to voicing the needs of the student members.
- Write the student column in the section newsletter (The View from Here: Perspectives on Northern and Rural Psychology), liaison with the Student Section, and be actively involved in the coordination of the North Star Student Award.

In order to move forward with this initiative, we do require a majority vote from a minimum of 9 members. When/if this is achieved, the section by

-laws will be altered accordingly and forwarded to CPA for approval. Please send in your email vote (yes, if you are in agreement with the proposed change; no, if you are not in agreement) to my attention (dyckkg@cc.umanitoba.ca) no later than January 31st, 2008.

Listserv

Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Laura-Voichita Ocolisan and Hope Yungblut and the assistance of Nigel Flear at CPA, our section listserv is now up and running. I would encourage you to take advantage of this new mechanism for communication with section members.

Webpage Volunteer Needed

I am still seeking a volunteer to take the lead on developing and maintaining the section webpage. Please contact me if you are interested in this position.

North Star Student Award

I am pleased to announce the development of the section's North Star Student Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize the student with the most meritorious submission to the Rural and Northern Section of the CPA annual convention. Additional information about this award can be found on page 3 of the newsletter. I would encourage all student members to consider applying for this award.

Karen Dyck,
Rural and Northern Psychology Section Chair

It's a Small World

"I think the extent to which I have any balance at all, any mental balance, is because of being a farm kid and being raised in those isolated rural areas."

James E. Jones

When one thinks of mental health care or health care delivery in a rural context, one often considers the remoteness, the limited resources, and the assumed attitudinal rigidity of its residents. However, a very different picture of the rural experience can also be painted, one of belonging, groundedness, tradition, balance, and beauty. This is the rural experience that I fell in love with. My name is Greg Gibson and I am currently employed through the Clinical Health Psychology Rural and Northern Program of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine. I provide psychological services to the Brandon RHA Adult Community Mental Health Program. Brandon Manitoba has a population of approximately 40,000 residents. Thus, the provision of a "rural" label onto Brandon may appear at first glance somewhat misleading. Upon speaking to area residents, however, one is reminded that Brandon and its surrounding region share many similarities with other rural regions. One resident called Brandon a "big small town", an unofficial motto to which many Brandon residents concur. The community is somewhat self-contained as it is over 200 kilometres from Winnipeg, Manitoba (the closest major city). Moreover, the region has many of the same issues as rural and small town communities (e.g. geographic barriers for out-of-town farmers, limited physical, human, and financial resources, mental health stigma, dual or multiple relationships, cultural and ethnic considerations, and trust issues in regard to the health care system in general).

I suppose that I have been interested in Rural and Northern Psychology since I decided to pursue psychology as a career. In my undergraduate and graduate training, I would often fantasize about "hanging a shingle" in my hometown of Selkirk, Manitoba (at that time, I did not quite grasp the "dual relationship" conundrums that I would likely face). Ironically, my pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral placements were in the town of Selkirk Manitoba and surrounding Interlake communities. During this time, my desire to continue practicing within a rural context became more pronounced. In particular, I appreciated the collegiality and collaboration of the multidisciplinary treatment teams. In my current work through the Brandon RHA, I continue to be spoiled in that respect. How many psychologists can spontaneously "pop in" on the staff psychiatrist, whose office is just down the hall, for a consult, referral, or just to "pick their brains"?

I often feel like a kid in a candy shop, in that there are so many opportunities in rural communities for psychology in terms of treatment, assessment experience, research, and program development. In my work, I have been involved with program evaluation practices with the adult community mental health services division of the Brandon RHA. I have also contributed to the development of a treatment and support group for men who were sexually abused as children, and I am regularly involved in staff discussions in regard to program development to meet the needs of our clientele and the community as a whole. Given the multitude of opportunities available, one particular challenge in working in a rural and Northern context is recognizing one's areas of competency and feeling comfortable consulting with other psychologists who have more experience in an area of clinical focus. Again, this is an area where I feel particularly spoiled in that, given my position through the Clinical Health Psychology Program, I have a built-in professional support network and can utilize a number of psychologists with training and expertise in a number of different clinical areas. I would suggest that, for those psychologists who are not as fortunate to have such a network, that creating an informal resource and consultation list would be highly advantageous.

I believe the most challenging aspect of the job has been defining the role of a psychologist for the region and, in particular, defining who I am as a psychologist. In other words, what do psychologists do, how can they be best utilized? This is a particularly important conversation to have with one's colleagues in terms of their understanding and expectations of psychological practice.

Overall, my experiences in rural practice has provided me with a rich appreciation for the practice of psychology as a whole and the valuable contributions that psychologists can make to health care delivery in these often underserved regions. My experience has also provided me with an appreciation for teamwork and support, both from colleagues who are different in terms of discipline yet regionally close, as well as support from other psychologists who live away from the region.

By Greg Gibson

Call For Rural & Northern Representative

Dr. Ian Nicholson, Chair of the Professional Affairs Committee of CPA, is seeking a representative from our section to sit on this committee. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity please contact Dr. Karen G. Dyck, Chair of the Rural and Northern Psychology Section, at dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca.

North Star Student Award



The North Star Student Award has been established by the Rural and Northern Psychology Section to recognize the student with the most meritorious submission to the Rural and Northern Section of the CPA annual convention. Any student whose presentation/poster has been accepted into the Rural and Northern Psychology Section Program is encouraged to apply. The winning submission will be recognized with a certificate and a monetary award. The student will also be invited to describe his/her work in the fall issue of the Rural and Northern Psychology Newsletter, The View from Here: Perspectives in Rural and Northern Psychology.

To be eligible for this award you must:

- Be first author of a presentation/poster that has been accepted into the Section Program at the CPA Convention in Halifax, June 2008, and a student at the time you did the work described in the paper.
- Notify the Section Chair that you wish to be considered for this award.
- Be prepared to attend an award ceremony at the convention.
- Be a member of the Rural and Northern Psychology Section at the time of the submission.

Please contact Dr. Karen Dyck, Chair, by email (dyckkg@cc.umanitoba.ca) if you wish to be considered for this award or if you have any questions.

Ethics Column

Submitted by Cindy Hardy

Over the past year, some of our members suggested we include an ethics column in the newsletter. As editor of the newsletter and a teacher of ethics, I am pleased to take on the task of leading this column. Each issue I will provide a vignette and ask you to send in your comments and thoughts in response to the vignette. Readers' responses to each vignette will be summarized anonymously and published in the next issue of the newsletter. If you have vignettes or situations you would like to submit to the column, or if you wish to reply to this vignette, please email to hardy@unbc.ca with "Rural and Northern Ethics" as the subject line.

Vignette

You have just opened a private practice of psychology in a northern community with limited mental health services. Someone you know in the community asks if you would consider providing services to their elderly parent who is suffering with agoraphobia. You have never treated agoraphobia before but you have treated other anxiety disorders. If you do not accept the referral, the parent will either go without services or have to travel long distances to obtain treatment. What should you do?

Understanding the mental health of rural families: Exploring the pathways from stress to intervention

(Findings initially presented at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference: June 2007 as part of a Rural Symposium entitled: *Understanding the mental health of rural families: Exploring pathways from stress to intervention*)

Rural Canadians often face significant challenges in accessing mental health services. First, there may be a general lack of understanding about mental health problems and help available. Second, there is often a scarcity of mental health resources in rural communities. Third, research knowledge on the mental health of rural Canadians is a relatively underdeveloped area. The Women's Health in Rural Communities (WHIRC) project is seeking to help in all three of these areas. In terms of raising community awareness of mental health issues, we have been conducting information sessions, workshops and focus groups in rural Nova Scotia. These activities are part of the Rural Experiences of Stress Questionnaire (RES-Q) and the Managing our Mood (MOM) randomized clinical trial for postpartum depression. The MOM program is designed to provide access to support for PPD in areas where there was typically a lack of psychological services. In an attempt to more fully understand maternal depression in rural Nova Scotia, we have been interviewing mothers of children under the age of 12. This study is embedded within the RES-Q conducting a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). In this brief article, we will summarize some of the results from the RES-Q and link the findings to the importance of community involvement in this kind of project.

The RES-Q explores the connections between stressors and mental health in a randomly selected sample of rural Nova Scotians. The RES-Q was developed in consultation with stakeholders, community members and a review panel of rural researchers. The objective for this study was to validate the RES-Q using measures of stress, anxiety and depression. A unique feature of the RES-Q is that it measures both frequency and intensity of stressors in several areas including: individual, relationships, health, work, community, finances, employment (including training), transportation and the environment.

Our preliminary results from 119 (92 females; 26 males) participants indicate good validity for both the frequency (Chronbach's alpha = .87) and intensity (Chronbach's alpha = .90) after eliminating non-contributing items. To date, we have looked at three social determinants of health: gender, education and income. The sole gender difference was that women reported lower frequency of environmental stressors ($t = -2.29, p < .05$) and lower perceived general stress ($t = -2.49, p < .05$). We found no significant impact of education level on RES-Q, stress, anxiety or depression scores. Individuals in the second lowest income category (\$15-\$19,999 annual household income) reported the highest levels of RES-Q total score frequency.

In order to evaluate the predictive power of the RES-Q, we tested a model consisting of the following hierarchical steps used in multiple regression analyses: 1. self-perceived general health and general family health; 2. general stress; and 3. RES-Q intensity and frequency subscale totals. The two separate outcome variables were anxiety and depression. Anxiety was significantly predicted by self-perceived health and general stress but not by either RES-Q scale. Perceived stress and the RES-Q intensity scale were significant unique predictors in the model testing depression scores. The entire model accounted for 28% of the variance in anxiety scores and 41% of the variance in depression scores.

These results provide preliminary validation for the RES-Q intensity and frequency subscales. The psychometric properties of the measure are good overall and there is some predictive power of the measure's scales for depression and anxiety. These results should be interpreted as preliminary given the small sample size. We have since conducted over 100 additional interviews and will soon be analyzing the results again including these participants.

We offer these results as support for our hypothesis that sources of stress, by measuring their intensity, frequency or both, could be important for understanding individual's mental health. Clinicians and researchers working with rural populations may want to consider the nature of stressors, their frequency and intensity for depressed and anxious individuals. We are beginning our analyses of the specific categories of stressors which should provide insight into which ones contribute more to mental health and the nature of their impact (i.e., is it frequency or intensity that is more important?). Further research is required in order to evaluate if the RES-Q is truly a measure of rural stressors through comparison to an urban sample.

If anyone would like to use the RES-Q in their research, more information on the project or a copy of the CPA presentation upon which this brief report is based, please contact Cyndi.brannen@dal.ca.

By Cyndi Brannen
IWK Health Centre
Dalhousie University



This research is part of the Women's Health in Rural Communities project. The authors wish to acknowledge the support of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for this research. More information on WHIRC can be found at <http://www.crfh.ca>.

Parenting Stress and Maternal Depression in Rural Mothers: Preliminary Findings

(Findings initially presented at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Conference: June 2007 as part of a Rural Symposium entitled: *Understanding the mental health of rural families: Exploring pathways from stress to intervention*)

Abidin (1995) suggested that child characteristics (e.g., adaptability, acceptability, demandingness, mood, hyperactivity), parent characteristics (e.g., depression, sense of competence, relationship with spouse, role satisfaction, social support, parental health), family context (e.g., marital status, employment) and life stress events are some of the most important contributors to parental stress.

Stress in the parenting system within the first three years of life has been identified as critical for both the emotional and behavioural development of the child and the development of the parent child relationship. Research has demonstrated that both high levels of stress and low levels (due to disengagement) of parental stress are predictive of dysfunctional parenting practices (e.g., inappropriate discipline, neglect, disengagement, physical abuse), (Abidin, 1990; 1992). While a variety of models have been developed to understand the determinants of parental stress, a common thread running through the various approaches is the interaction between the child, the parent(s) and environment as integral to the development, maintenance and severity of parental stress (Abidin, 1990). Previous research has identified a strong link between maternal psychological distress/ functioning and parenting stress, dysfunctional parental behaviours, and the social and emotional well-being of the child (Webster-Stratton, 1990).

The stress of parenting is great for all parents. Unique aspects of rural life can compound the factors of parental stress. These include social isolation, employment issues and a general lack of available resources, such as access to health care and childcare (Ostberg and Hagekull, 2000; Wijnberg and Reding, 1999). There are a wealth of studies in regard to parental stress within the urban population, however, the unique determinants of parental stress within the rural population has received limited attention. An important gap in research is the lack of study on parenting stress and maternal depression for rural families. Social support and depression have been identified as important mediating variables in the experience of parental stress. Moreover, there is a complete lack of research on the links between depression, parenting stress and general stress for rural mothers.

The present study seeks to examine the relationship between parenting stress, depression and social support through a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) with a random sample of rural mothers. Participants were administered the Depression, Anxiety and Stress

Scale (DASS, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) measures of stress, anxiety and depression, along with the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (Abidin, 1995), as well as a rural stress survey (as part of the larger validation study for the Rural Experience of Stress Questionnaire, RESQ). Each telephone interview lasted for approximately one hour.

The results that follow are preliminary, based upon a sample of 52 parents. Preliminary results demonstrate significant differences in depression between parents and non parents with non parents experiencing more depression than parents ($p=.036$), however, the average score for parents and non parents on the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) were both within the normal range. While overall the average depression scores for parents and non-parents are not clinically elevated, non-parents show a trend toward greater severity.

Similarly, non-parents report more general stress than parents within the rural population, demonstrating greater variability in the experience of stress and higher ratings of stress. Childcare stress was not identified as a significant stressor. Worrying about finding a reliable babysitter and finding a babysitter when needed were rated as somewhat stressful, however, trustworthiness, affordability and transportation were not identified as issues related to childcare.

These results are preliminary, but they suggest that there may be something protective about being a parent in the rural population. Rural parents appear to be less stressed and experience less depression than rural individuals without children. Childcare was expected to play a significant role in the experience of stress for the rural population, however, in this preliminary sample; the availability of childcare was not identified as a significant stressor. The findings suggest a need for further examination of the unique determinants of stress within the rural population. Further analysis is ongoing with a sample of 100 parents to examine a model of parental stress within the rural population and to examine this emerging trend of a possible stress protection afforded to parents rather than non-parents.

If anyone would like more information on the project or a copy of the CPA presentation upon which this brief report is based, please contact demberly@dal.ca.

(Continued on page 6)

Collective control, cultural identity, and the psychological well-being of northern Manitoba Cree youth

Melissa Tiessen

Department of Clinical Health Psychology, University of Manitoba (research conducted while at the Department of Psychology, McGill University)

As many of us working in areas of rural and northern psychology are aware, the physical and psychological health of Canadian Aboriginal people is an increasingly important topic. In the search for new, more effective intervention approaches, research with mainstream populations highlights two key factors that may impact individual well-being: (1) perceived personal control, that is, a sense of control over important aspects of one's life, and (2) a clear sense of self-identity. Recently, several studies suggest a role for collective factors in well-being, particularly (1) perceived collective control, or the sense that one's group has control over important aspects of group life, and (2) clarity of collective, or cultural, identity. However, these factors have been underappreciated to date, despite clear relevance for Aboriginal groups, given their historical position of decreased power, control, and loss of cultural identity.

Thus, the present program of research investigated the impact of collective control and cultural identity on the well-being of Aboriginal youth. Residents of two Cree communities in northern Manitoba collaborated in the research. Based on community members' input on important community and youth issues, we developed two surveys on youth well-being, which were completed across two years by over 80 students in grades 7 and up.

The results of both studies paralleled each other, and emphasized the important role of group-level factors in well-being. In line with much previous research, individual-level perceived control was associated with greater psychological well-being. However, greater perceived group-level control was also associated with well-being, and contributed to well-being over and above perceived individual-level control. Mediation analyses revealed that a possible mechanism for the effect of group-level control on well-being is through individual-level control, suggesting that group-level factors can have both direct and indirect effects on individual well-being. Finally, greater heritage cultural identification was also associated with greater well-being.

These findings suggest important implications for both further research and practice. As the study is the first of its kind to investigate the impact of group-level control in Aboriginal youth well-being, further studies are definitely needed to refine our understanding of the concept and of its mechanism of action. In the meantime, however, the results offer clear practical steps that can be taken, namely communities taking action to enhance the sense of group-level control and heritage cultural identity that is perceived not only by adolescents, but by all community members.

(Continued from page 5)

References

- Abidin, R. R. (1990). Introduction to the special issue: The stresses of parenting. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 19* (4), 298-302.
- Abidin, R. R. (1992). The determinants of parenting behaviour. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 21* (4), 407-412.
- Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F. (1995). *Manual for the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales*. (2nd. Ed.) Sydney: Psychology Foundation.
- Ostberg, M. & Hagekull, B. (2000). A structural modeling approach to the understanding of parenting stress. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 29*(4), 615-625.
- Webster-Stratton, C. (1990). Stress: A potential disruptor of parent perceptions and family interactions. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 19* (4), 302-312.
- Wijnberg, M.H. & Reding, L.M. (1999). Reclaiming a stress focus: The hassles of rural, poor single mothers. *Families in Society, 80* (5), 56-515.



This research is part of the Women's Health in Rural Communities project. The authors wish to acknowledge the support of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for this research. More information on WHIRC can be found at <http://www.crfh.ca>.

By: Debbie Johnson Emberly
IWK Health Centre
Dalhousie University

Rural & Northern Psychology Section of the CPA: Annual Business Meeting Minutes June 8, 2007

Present:

Karen Dyck, Cindy Hardy, Bob McIlwraith
Quorum was not met so the meeting was informal.

Review and approve agenda:

approved

Annual report from chair:

200 plus members in Rural and Northern section now
2 volunteers working on listserv; expect it to be ready in 3-4 weeks
No one volunteered to do web page
Best ever CPA program for section (8 submissions)
Bylaws were approved by membership over the past year

Student representative position on executive committee:

Karen reviewed description of activities of student rep on clinical section
Add student column in newsletter

Discussed idea of having an award for best student paper at CPA conference
Those present agreed we do not want to charge a fee for section membership

ACTION: Karen will ask CPA if there are rules about awards for students. Will have to take bylaws back to the CPA to add student rep.

Update regarding the listserv and webpage:

As noted in Chair's report.

Update and discussion regarding newsletter:

Job ads

CPA wants us to accept only those ads which are also announced thru CPA

Ethical issues

Support for the idea of column on ethics with opportunities for input / feedback (with checks that no id is revealed).
Cindy Hardy will lead.

Circulation

Discussed issues with keeping current email list. Problems seem to be caused by late fees and late registrations by CPA members; late registrants do not get on list.

Other

Idea to ask conference submitters to write brief articles for newsletter.

Other Business:

2008 - Halifax

2010 - CPA in Winnipeg

Dreams/vision for conference?

Keynote speaker at annual conference

Topics suggestions: program evaluation in rural areas (e.g. impact of having a psychologist in rural areas)

Obvious links to other sections

Community psychology

International /multicultural section (esp. re aboriginal focus)

Showcase students' research

Useful Links

The Northern Research Development program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is offering grants of up to \$40,000 (over 2 years) to support "research carried out north of the southern limit of sporadic discontinuous permafrost or research that is demonstrably relevant to social, economic, or cultural conditions or activities that characterize the Canadian North." Competitions are held twice a year, with deadlines in November and May. Additional information can

be found at: www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/northern_e.asp

See <http://www.naho.ca/english/journal.php> for an online journal focused on matters related to the health of aboriginal peoples.

See <http://www.fncfcs.com/pubs/onlinejournal.html> for an online journal focused on innovation and best practices in aboriginal child welfare.

Please forward all submissions to
the attention of:
Dr. Karen G. Dyck
Section Chair
200 – 237 Manitoba Ave.
Selkirk, MB
RIA 0Y4

Fax: (204) 785-7749
E-mail: dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca

www.cpa.ca

The Newsletter is produced by the Rural and Northern Section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and is distributed to members of the Section. The purpose of the Rural and Northern Section is to support and enhance the practice of rural and northern psychology. The goals of the section are: 1) Establish a network of professionals interested in the areas of rural and northern psychology (this may include individuals currently practicing in rural/northern areas of those with an interest in this area), 2) Enhance professional connectedness by facilitating linkages between rural and northern practitioners, 3) Distribute information relevant to the practice of rural and northern psychology, 4) Provide a forum to discuss practice issues unique to this specialty, and 5) Introduce students and new or interested psychologists to rural and northern practice. An application for membership in the Rural and Northern Section can be obtained from Dr. Karen Dyck, Section Chair, 200-237 Manitoba Ave., Selkirk MB, RIA 0Y4, dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca.

This issue of the Newsletter was edited by Karen Dyck and Cindy Hardy. Many thanks are extended to Silvia Simoes for her invaluable contributions to design and layout.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Canadian Psychological Association, its officers, directors, or employees.

All submissions are reproduced as submitted by the author(s).

Call for Submissions

The Newsletter Editors invite submission of articles and items of general interest to rural and northern psychologists. Faculty and students are encouraged to send submissions for the next newsletter to Karen Dyck, dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca. We also welcome submissions of photos of rural life and settings.