



2020 SOARS Vignettes Table of Contents

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SOARS PROJECT VIGNETTE

Faculty Name(s):

Leanne Wood Charlesworth

Student Name(s):

Lindsay Fink and Sarha Smith-Moyo

Project title:

Exploring Causes of Homelessness

The purpose of this project was to...

- Expose the involved undergraduate students to applied research, building their research knowledge and skill base.
- Explore causes of homelessness, locally, as well as the characteristics of individuals chronically within and on the periphery of homelessness.

To accomplish this, we...

Analyzed local homeless shelter data (Homeless Management Information System), reviewed relevant literature and interviewed relevant local service providers.

With the following interesting results...

Repeat shelter entries were very common, according to the data analyzed. A paper has been accepted for presentation at the May 2021 International Conference on Homelessness. The paper title and abstract are below:

Exploring Causes of Homelessness and Shelter Entry: A Case Study Analysis of Shelter Data Abstract

In recent years, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased in the United States. This paper analyzes 2019 data from 16 different emergency shelters in Monroe County, located in Upstate New York. The data were collected through the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and individuals were de-identified and de-duplicated for analysis. The purpose of this study is to explore the basic characteristics of the homeless population in Monroe County, and the dynamics of shelter use. The results of this study identify gender as a significant factor when analyzing the relationship between demographic variables and recorded reasons for shelter entry. Results also indicated age and race or ethnicity did not significantly influence odds of re-entering a shelter, but did significantly influence reasons for shelter entry. Overall, the most common recorded cause of shelter entry in 2019 in the examined county was eviction by primary tenant. Recommendations to better address recurrent shelter entry and potential chronic homelessness include more consideration for the diversity existing within the homeless population, the dynamics leading to shelter stays, including enhanced funding and training for shelter staff, as well as expanded access to permanent supportive housing programs.

I anticipate this activity will enhance student retention and increase student success...

I believe involvement with the project was a positive experience for the two undergraduate students. Both students gained enhanced understanding of research as well as homelessness. This expanded

knowledge base was immediately relevant to the students' junior year field placements; both students ended up placed with organizations serving individuals experiencing and/or at risk of homelessness. Awareness of these student opportunities and accomplishments builds Naz pride and enhances student motivation to engage in research.

As a faculty mentor, I incorporated the following characteristics of guided mentorship...

The students and I met early in the project to jointly establish expectations. A collegial environment was established and maintained throughout the project. Weekly meetings were held on Zoom (due to COVID-19 and the students' locations). Google Drive was used to create and share documents; A work plan and timeline were established within the first two weeks of the project. Student interests and concerns were solicited at the start of the project and guided development of the work plan and timeline. The students chose to work closely together (for example, conducting all interviews together) rather than splitting the project and working independently. Service providers in the community who were interviewed by the students contacted me to comment on their professionalism and communication skill.

My mentoring supported the following student learning outcomes (SLO)...

Most directly: Critical thinking, effective reasoning, collaboration, social responsibility, communicating effectively and demonstrating professionalism.

In the future, I (we) hope to build on this project by...

Searching for and seizing opportunities to expand student involvement in research.

Presenting the findings at the upcoming aforementioned conference, sharing findings locally with the Homeless Services Network, engaging in linked advocacy efforts related to our discoveries about causes of shelter entry and the high rate of shelter re-entry.

Continuing to seek out research, presentation and publication opportunities in this area.

For the two students involved, I believe their confidence and skills were developed through this project, which will facilitate their involvement in future research projects. In addition, both students learned more about homelessness, contributing to their success in their field placements (both students are involved now with the local homeless service provider community).

SOARS PROJECT VIGNETTE

Faculty Name(s):

Courtney Forbes

Student Name(s):

Kierstyn Christensen

Project title:

Pathways to Care for Veterans with First Episode Psychosis

The purpose of this project was to...

... involve a student in the initial phases of a collaborative project with a VA partner (Dr. Amy Wilson) investigating first episode psychosis.

Individuals with psychotic disorders who have a shorter duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) have better treatment outcomes. One step in shortening the DUP is to provide evidence-based treatments (EBTs) as close to the time of onset as possible. To do this, we need to better understand how individuals with first episode psychosis enter the treatment system (i.e. primary care doctor, emergency room, mental health professional). This would allow for the opportunity to better allocate these services, improving access to care. Studies evaluating the pathways to care for individuals with first episode psychosis have largely been conducted outside of North America, and no studies have evaluated these questions with a Veteran population. This study is a retrospective chart review of Veterans from the northeast region identified through the National Psychosis Registry (maintained by the VA Central Office).

The study has three primary aims and two exploratory aims:

- (1) Identify (a) mental and physical conditions that Veterans present with and (b) the location they present at (i.e. primary care, outpatient mental health, emergency room) when they initially contact the VA
- (2) Determine the date and location of first psychotic-spectrum disorder diagnosis and whether the diagnosis occurred within or after the first 6 months of engagement with VA care
- (3) Determine (a) whether the Veteran received any EBT for early episode psychosis and (b) the length of time between the date of VA diagnosis and engagement with EBT
- (4) Exploratory aims: examine differences based on (1) racial group or (2) the presence or absence of a substance use disorder.

To accomplish this, we...

... first had many administrative hurdles to jump through at the VA. Both the student and I had to obtain research privileges as Without Compensation (WOC) employees of the VA Finger Lakes Healthcare System, be added to the VA IRB protocol, obtain VPN access to the VA network, and approval to access patient databases - which took quite a bit of paperwork (and patience!).

Throughout this process, the student had the opportunity to see both the benefits and challenges of conducting research in a large system.

Over the course of the summer we read articles that supported a deeper understanding of the research project (i.e. first-episode psychosis, evidence-based treatments, VA system of care, previous

pathways to care research). The SOARS student met with me twice weekly via Zoom – once individually, and once with me and the co-PI at the VA (Amy Wilson). Additionally, all three of us participated in a monthly VA-wide conference call discussing first-episode psychosis treatment program development with leaders in the field.

With the following interesting results...

The main product at this phase is a comprehensive coding system to be used throughout the remainder of the study as we extract the data of interest from individual patient charts. This coding system was initially informed by a literature review of similar studies. We were able to further refine the coding system once we had access to a patient database called SMITREC (Serious Mental Illness Treatment Resource and Evaluation Center) that includes select information on all individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorders in the VISN 1 and VISN 2 regions (essentially the Northeast). In addition to informing the coding system, the SMITREC database provided some initial descriptive data of those with psychotic disorders in the region, including (but not limited to): age, gender, race/ethnicity, service connection, substance use disorder diagnosis, antipsychotic prescriptions (including clozapine), and engagement with various types of treatment within the VA system (e.g. general mental health, mental health intensive case management, supportive employment).

I anticipate this activity will enhance student retention and increase student success...

Involvement in this project was an opportunity for the student connect what they learned in the classroom to a research study in its initial phase. Concepts covered in the classroom are additional meaning/purpose when put in the context of a real-world study, and further, allows an opportunity for the student to gain confidence in their ability to apply the skills they learned through coursework. Further, this particular project allowed the student to step outside the college campus environment and interact with researchers and clinician working at the VA. Along with this came learning about the system as a whole, including about Veterans and the system of care created to serve them. Beyond being a good learning opportunity, this also allowed the student to make professional connections.

As a faculty mentor, I incorporated the following characteristics of guided mentorship...

Establish Expectations: We collaborated to identify mutually agreed upon expectations (with an understanding that the VA often has a timeline of its own). Additionally, we developed plan to discuss scholarly readings at regular intervals throughout the 10-week term with ongoing input on topics from the student.

Provide Regular Meetings: We had one-on-one meetings twice per week (once with Dr. Wilson from the VA joining) to discuss progress with the project and the scholarly papers that we chose to review. Within these meetings we identified any barriers to achieving goals, worked through issues that come up, and discussed any new interesting questions that arose from recently completed work.

Utilize the Entire Research Process: The SOARS student started at beginning of the larger project, and thus had the opportunity take part in a number of early decisions about data collection/extraction, coding, and management. Additionally, the student had the opportunity to determine what variables (that are feasible to collect) are most meaningful to them and take ownership of that piece of the project.

Offer a Collegial Environment: As discussed above, the student was involved in early decisions made about procedures for the larger project. There were many opportunities to provide valuable input from a fresh perspective as someone new to the project.

My mentoring supported the following student learning outcomes (SLO)...

Critical Thinking: Good research cannot happen without critical thinking. This project allowed the student to connect what they learned in the classroom to the project itself. The student also encountered, along with the research team, the inevitable challenges that come with research in the real world (i.e. delays, technical issues) and took part in problem solving to manage those issues.

Commitment to Ethics and Integrity: This study required an understanding of both research and healthcare ethics, as our data collection involves the review of Veterans electronic medical records. The process of approval to work on a VA project required completion of a number of VA trainings including those related to HIPAA, which focus specifically on the protection of health information.

Understanding and Appreciation of Differences: This project stems from the need for appropriate care for those with first-episode psychosis, specifically, and serious mental illness more generally. An aim of this study is to determine if there are differences in care for this already underserved population based on race/ethnicity or substance use. The student learned about these issues through the research project itself, discussion of research articles, and participation in a monthly VA-wide conference call discussing first-episode psychosis treatment program development.

Communicating Effectively: As a part of SOARS, the student will be present their results as a part of the CARS program. In addition, they will be highly encouraged to submit their project for presentation at a psychology conference. Conferences provide the student the opportunity to write up the results of the study, create a scholarly poster, and engage in conversation with others about their work in professional academic environments.

Demonstrating Professionalism: Interacting with the VA system and VA employees was new for the student, and provided an opportunity to practice professional interactions and relationship building with those in a field that they may wish to enter.

In the future, I (we) hope to build on this project by...

... continuing data collection! Now that we have a coding system and access to a list of those diagnosed with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder in the relevant regions, we are moving ahead with individual chart reviews.

SOARS PROJECT VIGNETTE

Faculty Name(s):

Cuthbert Rowland-Storm

Student Name(s):

Jessica Casper and Taylor Coonelly

Project title:

Teacher Microaggressions and Allyship in Children's Literature

The purpose of this project was to...

understand instances of microaggressions and allyship by teachers in children's literature

To accomplish this, we...

studied Critical Multicultural Analysis, microaggressions, and allyship, discovered and read children's literature with instances of microaggressions and allyship around African American students, LGBTQIA+ students, & students with disabilities, explored and studied relevant theories, and coded and analyzed our data, based on these theories

With the following interesting results...

while we were able to find instances of both personal and academic allyship and microaggressions, in the texts, LGBTQIA+ characters experience invalidation for who they are, African Americans experience microaggressions because of their assumed intelligence and academic ability, but characters with disabilities experience microaggressions for both who they are and what it is believed they can do.

I anticipate this activity will enhance student retention and increase student success...

by reminding students that they can be critical analysts of the world around them, that the tools that they will use as teachers are not neutral, and they can be part of a strong team that values who they are and what they bring. It also gives them critical lenses with which to view their own behavior as students, classmates, and future teachers, making them advocates for social justice and making Nazareth a more positive place for marginalized groups.

As a faculty mentor, I incorporated the following characteristics of guided mentorship...

we held a consistent schedule with clear roles and expectations both during the meetings and between them, we collaboratively defined terms and frameworks and the students also independently researched ideas and found texts, we shared texts, problem solved, sought each others' opinions, and made sure everyone's voice was heard and respected, and I was able to work with a senior and a freshman who worked very collaboratively and respectfully with each other, sharing the workload and ideas.

My mentoring supported the following student learning outcomes (SLO)...

relating knowledge to daily life, critical thinking, reflective thinking, effective reasoning, commitment to ethics and integrity, collaboration, understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences, social responsibility, communicating effectively, and demonstrating professionalism.

In the future, I (we) hope to build on this project by...

publishing findings, and studying how to effectively use texts such as these as teaching tools for preservice teachers.