IRB SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSAL

Mindy Humphreys: SOWK 5226

**Women: Healthy Relationships and How It Relates to Self-Esteem**

**1.** The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the relation of self-esteem and domestic violent relationships. Clients enrolled in the CRADLES program at Family Connections will have access to participate in a 6-week support group called Women and Healthy Relationship facilitated by a contracted therapist, Cynthia Schiebel, LPC.

All participants will be participants in a Women and Healthy Relationships support group. There will be approximately 8-10 females in the study. Clients under the age of 18 will not be allowed in the support group; there will be no maximum age limit to participate in the study. The participants of this study can be from any ethnic background. The participants state of health is good. No participants will be hospitalized. Some participants may have a mental health diagnosis but is not expected to impede their participation. This study will not include vulnerable participants.

**2.** Recruitment for the research study will be solicited by participants in a Women and Healthy Relationships support group. All participants will currently be clients in the CRADLES program. Upon arrival to the first group session, I, the only researcher, will present the opportunity to participate in the research study to each participant in the support group. The researcher will verbally review the consent form to the group. After the review is complete, the researcher will then administer the consent form individually and give an opportunity for any perspective participant to ask questions. Each participant will physically sign the consent form. The researcher will give a copy of the signed consent form to each participant so they can read through the form again as well as have the contact numbers for supervisors, IRB chair and mental health agencies. The researcher will keep the original copies in a HIPPA compliant locked cabinet in a separate folder from all collected data. Please see the downloaded consent form for this study.

**3.** The project's methodology is a single-group study with a pre, post, post administration of instruments. A standardized instrument will be given at pre and post: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The pre-test of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale will be administered at the very beginning of the first group session. The post-test of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale will be administered at the very end of the last group session. Another post-test will be administered after the support group series has ended. This post-test instrument is an exit interview consisting of five questions. This instrument will be completed for each participant within two days of completion of the support group. The exit interview will have the option of being completed in a scheduled face-to-face interview at Family Connections or via phone, depending on the participants preference. Finally, the researcher will observe each group session and track the number of comments made reflecting self-esteem.

The intervention in the research is the support group series. Participants will meet once per week for six weeks for two hours. All participants will be given a copy of the book *Facing Love Addiction* by Pia Mellody. Participants will engage in the weekly curriculum for the first half of each session, followed by an open discussion for reflection and discussion. Participants will create a self-care plan at the last group session.

Please see the downloaded Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the exit interview questionaire.

**4.** There are no physical, legal or financial risks known in this study. However, there is minimal psychological risk. This study asks participants to discuss views of self-esteem and other curriculum content, therefore could be potentially harmful because it could bring up past trauma of abuse among participants or present situations of unhealthy relationships. Also, there is a potential risk of social harm to participants because they are discussing a very sensitive topic with their group members. People may have very different views on certain questions or situations and therefore lead to an intense discussion among the group. The likelihood is minimal for social risk as well as the group discussion is facilitated by the therapist. A couple of alternative methods were considered for this study. One method considered was conducting a complete qualitative study by solely observing change of behavior in the participants post sessions. Another method would be through observation as well by asking the facilitator for feedback from all six sessions. Both of these methods are thought to be less beneficial in gaining data as information from the participants directly is the best source for data in this study. Also, the most reliable source of data would be from a standardized pre and post test using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. This instrument provides the participants with the same definition of self-esteem as well as in the same format.

**5.** In order to minimize the risk of harm, participants will be warned about the content of the study and means of collecting data prior to participating in the first session. Prior to the data collection process, the therapist will acknowledge the importance of everyone’s voice in the session and that everyone is from different backgrounds so therefore everyone has very different views on discussions that may occur. This is expected to encourage people to be respectful of others’ opinions and contributions to the group session. Also, all participants will be reminded that participation is completely voluntary and if they choose to leave at any point they may. If anyone, or the group, seems to be uncomfortable they will be asked whether or not they would like to continue the study, and if not, it will be stopped immediately.

Also, each due to the fact that each participant will be receive services through the CRADLES program, they will already be working with a case manager. Participants will be encouraged to speak to their case manager regarding any resources that they may need during the support group series. The case manager serves as a supportive resource for the participants as they meet with clients once per week. All interaction between clients and case managers are confidential and HIPPA compliant.

A list of mental health providers and contact information is listed in the consent form. Each participant will receive a copy of the consent form they signed. In addition, the researcher will inform the participants that if they wish to have access to any of the listed providers, that the researcher will provide the contact information again and assist them in contacting the provider(s) if needed. All referrals to mental health providers will be HIPPA compliant.

The procedures for protecting and minimizing against potential risks will likely be highly effective. Clients in the CRADLES program have a close working relationship with their case managers. The CRADLES program is also a long-term case management program. This offers an ongoing support service to participants long after the support group is over. Also, the case managers have a professional working relationship to each of the mental health providers listed in the consent form, which will aide in referrals.

**6.** The primary benefit of this study will be for the participants. The participants will have the opportunity to complete a six-week series on healthy relationships. On administering the post self-esteem scale, participants will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the pre and post scale. This will allow them to see any growth that they made in a six-week period related to their view of their self-esteem. Also, during the exit interview, participants will have a time to reflect on what they learned during the classes.

The CRADLES program will also benefit from this study. This will be the second time the series has been offered to CRADLES clients. There was not a research study done during the first series, which did not offer data on the effectiveness of the support group. By completing this study all data will be given to the administrator of the CRADLES program. Data will assist to gain helpful knowledge on what clients thought was very helpful as well as what could improve the support group once implemented again.

The findings of this study would benefit the community, in particular for local programs who serve women for insight on a program that may benefit their clients. On a nationwide scale, the CRADLES program is a federally-funded AIA program. This study could provide valuable information for best-practice models that could benefit other AIA programs who serve the same population as the CRADLES program.

**7.** Whether or not participants participate in the research study, those who attend 5 out of 6 group sessions will receive a $50 HEB gift card. For those who attend the support group, dinner and childcare will also be provided. This again, is not dependent on if they participate in the research study.

**8.** The anticipated benefits of participating in this study outweigh potential risks. An unknown level of risk that may be related to anticipated benefits could be women who make shifts in unhealthy relationships as they grow in self-esteem. This could cause friction with the other participant in the unhealthy relationship.

**9.** The agency to be used for this study is Family Connections located at 825 E. 53 1/2 St. E-101 Austin, TX 78751. The agency has approved the researcher to conduct this study. Please see downloaded approval letter from agency.

**10.** The researcher is a graduate student in the School of Social Work at Texas State University-San Marcos. This proposal is in direct relationship to social work as it will measure the benefit of a support group related to domestic violence and the correlation to self-esteem. Women in domestic violent relationships are a primary population in the field of social work. Social workers may work with this population in settings such as domestic violence shelters, Child Protective Services, mental health field, and more. The researcher is completing their graduate practicum at their place of employment, Family Connections.

Faculty instructor: Dr. Angela Ausbrooks, aa16@txstate.edu, 512-245-9067.

**11.** Dr. Ausbrooks approved this study during the review of the education contract on February 4, 2010. Dr. Ausbrook's information was submitted on the IRB webpage application for this study.

**12.** This study has not be approved by another IRB.

**13.** Individuals that will have access to the findings of this study:

Dr. Holly VanScoy-researcher's field instructor, Dr. Angela Ausbrooks-faculty member, Trish Rivera-CRADLES Program Manager, Mindy Humphreys-researcher, participants in the study and if published, any reader of the article.

This study will be submitted to be published in social work journals as a result of the internship requirements.