CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING SYMPTOM INVALIDATION AS EXPERIENCED BY PATIENTS WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

ALLYSON BONTEMPO

DR. ALLYSON BONTEMPO DISSERTATION PRESENTATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPT 27
12:15–1:45PM

Dr. Allyson Bontempo defended her dissertation at SC&I in August, 2023. Her interests and research focus on improving patient experience. Her work targets three areas crucial to patient experience: diagnostic error, the patient-clinician relationship, and patient support networks including online communities. Her work seeks to better understand how patient relationships with clinicians work in concert with patients' broader support networks outside of the healthcare system to shape the patient experience, particularly around issues of diagnosis. The frameworks from which she pulls to understand the patient experience as shaped by the patient-clinician relationship during the diagnostic process are invalidation, trust, and clinician uncertainty (particularly, how these three frameworks intersect). Diagnostic contexts in which she is most interested are difficult-to-diagnose and contested health conditions. Dr. Bontempo's faculty advisor is Lisa Mikesell.

This dissertation is an explication and investigation into the phenomenon that I call symptom invalidation, which I define as communication that deems one's symptoms or related experiences as not real or of value. Drawing on the experiences of patients with endometriosis, I explore what message features constitute invalidating communication, what the negative sequelae of invalidating communication are, whether invalidation communication can be reliably measured, and whether the association between invalidation and negative sequelae can be tested.