Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of

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“Making Connections among Disciplinary Perspectives in Nursing: An Exploration of Integral Theory as a Metatheoretical Perspective Informing Nursing Scholarship and Practice”

School of Nursing

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10:00AM
University Centre Building
Room A207a

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Noreen Frisch, School of Nursing, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, School of Nursing, UVic (Member)
Dr. Timothy Black, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Mary Enzman Hines, School of Nursing, University of Colorado

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Marie Hoskins, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been growing interest in Ken Wilber’s (2001) Integral Theory in nursing, predominantly among holistic nurses and educators, and proponents of unitary-caring and healing perspectives. As a metatheory, Integral Theory holds the possibility of illuminating connections among various theoretical and philosophical perspectives in nursing, so that nurses might gain a more comprehensive grasp of the complexity of situations in which they find themselves, in a way that informs action. While there is growing interest in Integral Theory in nursing scholarship (Clark, 2006, 2012, 2013; Clark & Pelicci, 2011; Dossey, 2013; Jarrin, 2007, 2012; Watson, 2005), Integral Theory is being introduced into nursing in ways that have not been clarified for the discipline or profession of nursing. At this nascent period, it is evident that nursing scholars are using Integral Theory in some ways that depart from an approach used by some other disciplines, in particular, in the practice discipline of psychology. In psychology, a substantial number of peer-reviewed publications exist where Integral Theory is used as a metatheoretical framework for organizing disciplinary knowledge to inform professional practice.

The purpose of this paper-based dissertation has been to clarify how Integral Theory is being taken up by the discipline and profession of nursing, in relation to the metatheoretical approach used in field of psychology and other fields of study, and to gain a practice-based perspective on Integral Theory in nursing, which is currently lacking. This has been achieved using the following three approaches, which are presented in three separate papers in this dissertation:

1. The first paper introduces Integral Theory to the nursing community as a metatheory, capable of providing an integrated, coherent view of multiple disciplinary perspectives within nursing and, using a case example, demonstrates Integral Theory’s application in nursing practice.

2. The second paper examines Dossey’s Theory of Integral Nursing from Integral Theory’s metatheoretical perspective. Dossey’s Theory of Integral Nursing has been widely circulated in the holistic nursing community and, consequently, may be influencing the uptake of Integral Theory in nursing in significant ways. Although Dossey incorporates aspects of Integral Theory into her Theory of Integral Nursing, and has incorporated the word “integral” into the title of her theory, this paper demonstrates how her theory does not capitalize on the metatheoretical potential of Integral Theory.

3. The third paper reports on research findings from a qualitative study conducted using an Interpretive Descriptive Research Methodology, to investigate how nurses in clinical practice settings are taking up Integral Theory.

The presentation of this dissertation is organized in the following manner. The introductory chapter includes a description of Integral Theory in academic scholarship, the potential usefulness of Integral Theory in Nursing as a metatheory, and a review of literature on Integral Theory in the professional practice fields of nursing and psychology. The three papers are then presented in three separate chapters, followed by a final chapter outlining implications of this dissertation for the practice discipline of nursing. Due to the brevity required to condense study methodology and findings in a publishable paper, research methodological issues related to this study are also presented in this introductory chapter. In particular, the argument presented in this first chapter, along with Integral Theory’s AQAL framework, represent the theoretical scaffolding for the Interpretive Description study.