



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BSW (University of the Fraser Valley, 2010)

**“Risky Business: A Narrative Inquiry of Male Child and Youth Care
Practitioners use of Therapeutic Touch”**

School of Child and Youth Care

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

9:30 A.M.

Human and Social Development Building
Room B107

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jennifer White, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Timothy Black, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Gary Kuchar, Department of English, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Male child and youth care (CYC) practitioners have rarely been queried about how, or if, they use therapeutic touch (TT) with clients. A significant amount of literature suggests that TT with children and youth can have a positive impact on development, social, emotional and physical wellbeing, and a reduction of aggressive behaviour. However, for male practitioners, using caring touch with clients grows ever more precarious given the increased perception that they are vulnerable to allegations of misconduct and concern that touching clients could exacerbate symptoms of trauma. This narrative inquiry examines how male CYC practitioners make sense of, and engage in, the use of therapeutic touch. Through interviews of five men from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, stories were collected about experiences, values, and personal histories to discover how they were informed about and navigate therapeutic touch with clients. Four themes were identified including, personal histories, fear, vulnerability and connection. How participants approach their use of therapeutic touch was found to depend on early life experiences, important life events, anecdotal evidence that reinforced fears about using touch, and the current social and political culture such as the #metoo movement. This study also finds that more research, dialogue and training is needed in order for male CYC practitioners to feel safe and competent to use therapeutic touch in a way that is beneficial for clients.

Keywords: Therapeutic touch, male child and youth care practitioners