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

of

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MA (Trinity Western University, 2005)
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“Re-examining the Role of Counsellor Empathy in Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction”

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Friday, July 31, 2020
1:00 P.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. John Walsh, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Susan Tasker, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Sarah Macoun, Department of Psychology, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Shane Sinclair, Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Figley’s (1995; 2002a) model of compassion stress/fatigue was used as a reference-point to re-examine the role of therapist/counsellor empathy in predicting therapist/counsellor compassion fatigue (CF) and compassion satisfaction (CS). The therapeutic alliance was also examined as a predictor of therapist/counsellor CF and CS. Participants included 146 female-identifying Canadian therapists/counsellors, aged 24-73 years. The Empathy Assessment Index (EAI), a social cognitive neuroscience-based empathy scale, gauged therapist/counsellor empathy; and the Working Alliance Inventory – Short therapist version (WAI-S) gauged therapist/counsellor perceptions of the strength of the therapeutic alliance. The Professional Quality of Life scale – Fifth edition (ProQOL-V) was the outcome measure for therapist/counsellor CF and CS. Contrary to Figley’s model, partial least squares path analyses determined that therapist/counsellor empathy was a significant inverse predictor of therapist/counsellor CF ($R^2 = .40$ for total empathy-based CF model) and a significant positive predictor of therapist/counsellor CS ($R^2 = .16$ for total empathy-based CS model). The therapeutic alliance likewise proved to be a significant inverse predictor of therapist/counsellor CF ($R^2 = .37$ for total therapeutic alliance-based CF model) and a significant positive predictor of therapist/counsellor CS ($R^2 = .29$ for total therapeutic alliance-based CS model). Personal Characteristics including age and years of clinical experience, and Workplace/Organizational factors including supervision and peer support, and percentage of non-distressing clients on therapist/counsellor caseloads, predicted less risk for therapist/counsellor CF and greater likelihood for therapist/counsellor CS. Additional analyses revealed that the therapeutic bond was equivalent to empathy in predicting therapist/counsellor CF, and stronger than empathy in predicting therapist/counsellor CS.