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

ADDISON J. MOTT

BA (McGill University, 2013)

“Readiness to Change, Trait Emotional Intelligence, and Client Fit in Wilderness Therapy”

School of Child and Youth Care

Tuesday, December 8, 2020
10:30am
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Doug Magnuson, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Patti-Jean Naylor, Department of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen MacKinnon, School of Nursing, UVic

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

Background: Wilderness therapy is one type of residential treatment that has been shown to successfully engage adolescents in mental health and substance use treatment. A growing body of wilderness therapy outcomes research supports this and wilderness therapy is being increasingly recognized as a legitimate intervention for adolescents experiencing challenges with mental health and substance use. Some evidence suggests that not all elements of wilderness therapy necessarily work the same for all clients. The question of client fit in wilderness therapy, or what works for whom, is one that has yet to receive much empirical attention in the literature.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine how client fit moderates the relationship between participation in one Canadian wilderness therapy program and two outcome variables: trait emotional intelligence and readiness to change. Specifically, this research examines: (1) changes in clients’ trait emotional intelligence from pre- to post-wilderness therapy, (2) changes in clients’ readiness to change from pre- to post-wilderness therapy, and (3) if these changes differ by pre-treatment client-level variables – sex, age, funding, digital interference in everyday life, or substance abuse severity.

Methodology: Research was conducted with 48 participants ranging in age from 14 to 20 years. A longitudinal case study design was employed. Data were gathered by program staff using standardized data collection tools, modified versions of standardized tools, and administrative forms.

Findings/Conclusions: Findings indicate that participation in this Canadian wilderness therapy program leads to statistically significant increases in readiness to change but not trait emotional intelligence. On average, participants who experienced interference in their everyday life due to video games or online activity before wilderness therapy had larger trait emotional intelligence change scores, while participants who experienced interference in their everyday life due to a virtual relationship had larger changes in readiness to change. None of the client-level pre-treatment variables included in this study significantly predicted increases in readiness to change following wilderness therapy.