Compassion Fatigue Among Academic Advisors: Evidence from the Field

Joshua Morrison

May 18, 2012
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Looking for one of these . . .

To solve this problem?

I THINK IT'S STRESS!!
Definitions

- Compassion Satisfaction (CS)
  - The pleasure that a helping professional derives from doing their work well

- Compassion Fatigue (CF)
  - The consequent emotions and behaviors resulting from interactions with traumatized or suffering individuals; lack of efficacy due to work-related stress
Definitions

• **Burnout**
  - Loss of efficacy in work due to emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue

• **Secondary Traumatic Stress**
  - Negative feelings, intrusive thoughts, and maladaptive behaviors as a result of interactions with traumatized or suffering clients
Study of CF & CS

- Questions asked
  - To what extent do academic advisors experience compassion satisfaction, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, generalized stress?
  - Does a score vary depending on biographical or environmental variables?
Study of CF & CS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Years Advising</th>
<th>Advisees/Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>92.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>88.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Study of CF & CS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>STS</th>
<th>Interp.</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Interp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>37.65</td>
<td>25.875</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>High: 42</td>
<td>37.54</td>
<td>High: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>Ave: 23-41</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>37.09</td>
<td>25.29</td>
<td>19.81</td>
<td>Low: 22</td>
<td>35.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study of CF & CS

- Collected data:
  - Years advising
  - Advising contacts/week (all methods)
  - Gender

- Two instruments to collect DV:
  - Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)
  - Index of Clinical Stress
  - Scores for CS, Burnout, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Generalized Stress
Study of CF & CS

- Data Analysis
  - Descriptive statistics on IV
  - ANOVA for each IV on each DV
- Allowed general view of sample
- Allowed comparisons of level of each DV by bio/environmental variables
Results – Years Advising

- One-way ANOVA (<5 years, 5+ years) resulted in
  - No significant difference in CS, STS, or Generalized Stress
  - Significant difference in Burnout
    - Advisors with <5 years experience reported higher levels of burnout (p=.0281)
  - Generalized stress nearly significant (0.0517)
Results – Advisees/Week

- One-way ANOVA for number of advisees/week (<100, 100+) yielded:
  - No significant differences in CS, Burnout, Generalized Stress
  - Significant difference ($p=0.0111$) in Secondary Traumatic Stress
    - Those with higher advising loads reported higher levels of STS
Results – Gender

- One-way ANOVA (<5 years, 5+ years) resulted in no significant differences in any IV by gender
Discussion

- This study the first of its kind in USA
- Results of this study are preliminary
- Results consistent with national studies on other helping professions
- Lowering CF and raising CS likely to result in lower turnover, higher job satisfaction, better student outcomes
Discussion

- Increased CF means high turnover, high cost to replace, lost productivity, negative work environment
- High CS does not mitigate CF
- CF has personal, family, and work-place impacts
- Limitations are low sample size, one institution type studied, levels of DV
Coping with CF
Coping with CF
Coping with CF

Advisors should attempt the following:

- Get adequate rest, exercise
- Start or participate in a dyad or group sharing series
- Vary workload
- Reduce case load
Thank you…….

To the advisors that participated in this study

To Shobha Pais, PhD, the PI on this project

To Amy Jo Brandt, for statistical assistance
Contact Information

Joshua Morrison
317-274-2724
josjomer@iupui.edu
about.me/josh.morrison
IndyJoshM