

# Somatic countertransference experiences of nurse Therapeutic Touch practitioners: A content analysis. Part 1. Body

Catherine Jirak Monetti, PhD, RN, CNE, QTTP (RWJF Scholar);

Doris Ezomo, MSN, MPA, RN;

Dorothy C. Nwanonyiri, MSN, RN-BC



Kean University, New Jersey, USA; Therapeutic Touch International Associates, Inc. (TTIA)

### **PURPOSE**

To qualitatively explore & describe the phenomenon of somatic countertransference (SCT), as experienced by nurse Therapeutic Touch (TT) practitioners during their work with traumatized clients

## **BACKGROUND**

- Energy healing not requiring a patient's re-traumatization holds important implications for both patients & clinicians. The residual effects of trauma are removed (Janet, 1925/1973), in part, by the practitioner's experience & SCT phenomenon.
- Psychotherapists are already incorporating energy-based healing modalities, including TT, into their practices (Macecevic, 2008).

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

- Trauma is any experience that has threatened the health or well-being of an individual, & need not involve a catastrophic event (Brewin, Dalgleish, & Joseph, 1996)
- IOM (2007) recommends that alternatives to traditional exposure-based therapies & Rx be explored.
- Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) considered the therapist's body a surrogate for the client's trauma-related thoughts & images in search of a body.
- SCT is a newly articulated phenomenon (Shaw, 2003, 2004). It is distinct from the traditional notion of countertransference (CT; Freud, 1910; Schroder, 1985).
- SCT is defined by Orbach & Carroll (2006) as "the therapist's awareness
  of their own body, of sensations, images, impulses, & feelings that
  offer a link to the client's healing process & the intersubjective field"
  (p. 64)

# **RELATED TERMS**

•Mind-Body Connection (Paley, 2004); Body-centered CT; Embodiment; Embodied CT (Jakubowski, 2012); Embodied Simulation; Embodied Empathy; Embodied Transcendental Empathy (Macecevic, 2008); Kinesthetic Empathy (Pallaro, 2007)

# **METHOD & DATA ANALYSIS**

- •Purposive sampling of eight expert nurse TT practitioners
- Audio taped 60 minute face-to-face interviews
- Use of a semi-structured interview guide with 6 open-ended questions
- Inductive, latent content analysis of qualitative descriptive data with the method described by Sandelowski (1993, 1995, 2010)

# PARTICIPANTS

- Homogenous sample of expert nurse TT practitioners (n = 8)
- Ages: 61-78 (M 67.13, Md 66)
- Gender: 100% Female
- Ethnicity: 6 (75.0%) white; 2 (25.0%) other
- Education: 1 (12.5%) Associate; 2 (25.0%) BS; 4 (50.0%) Masters;
   1(12.5%) PhD
- Years in Nursing: 1 (12.5%) 11-15 yrs; 7 (87.5%) > 16 yrs
- Years Practicing TT: 1 (12.5%) 11-15 yrs; 7 (87.5%) > 16 yrs
- TT Certification: 5 (62.5%) yes; 3 (37.5%) no
- Other Certifications: 6 (75.0%) yes; 2 (25.0%) no; (NP, AHNP, CNS, APN, NBCC, RNC, Reiki, QTTT, GI, Aromatherapy, Creative Healing)
- Other Holistic Practices: 7 (87.5%) yes; 1 (12.5%) no

# **ACADEMIC DEBATE**

•Study findings contribute to the academic debate about the self/other distinction in neuroscience, nursing, psychology, and philosophy.

#### CONTENT ANALYSIS: CODING FRAMEWORK



## **FINDINGS**

#### SCT:

<u>Participant 8</u>: "...when I work with the individual, & of course I'm centered, & I'm in their field, & our fields are interacting with each other... I have thoughts. I sometimes have images, & sometimes sounds. I experience feelings, I can pick up a mood, general mood, whenever I do TT, especially with traumatized people." <u>Body:</u>

Participant 1: "I don't pick up things so much in my body anymore, I think because I tend to get more images now...more light."

Participant 6: "I don't get many feelings in my body because I make sure I'm well-centered."

## Images:

<u>Participant 5</u>: "I can't sense exactly how they see, but someone who is blind, when I close my eyes, I can see much more than with my eyes open, the unseen world that they see."

<u>Participant 1</u>: "Sometimes (the images) are like you're developing a photograph & then it gets sort of a little bit fuzzy, & then it gets really clear."

<u>Participant 7</u>: "There are times when I will get a memory of theirs as a complete little movie."

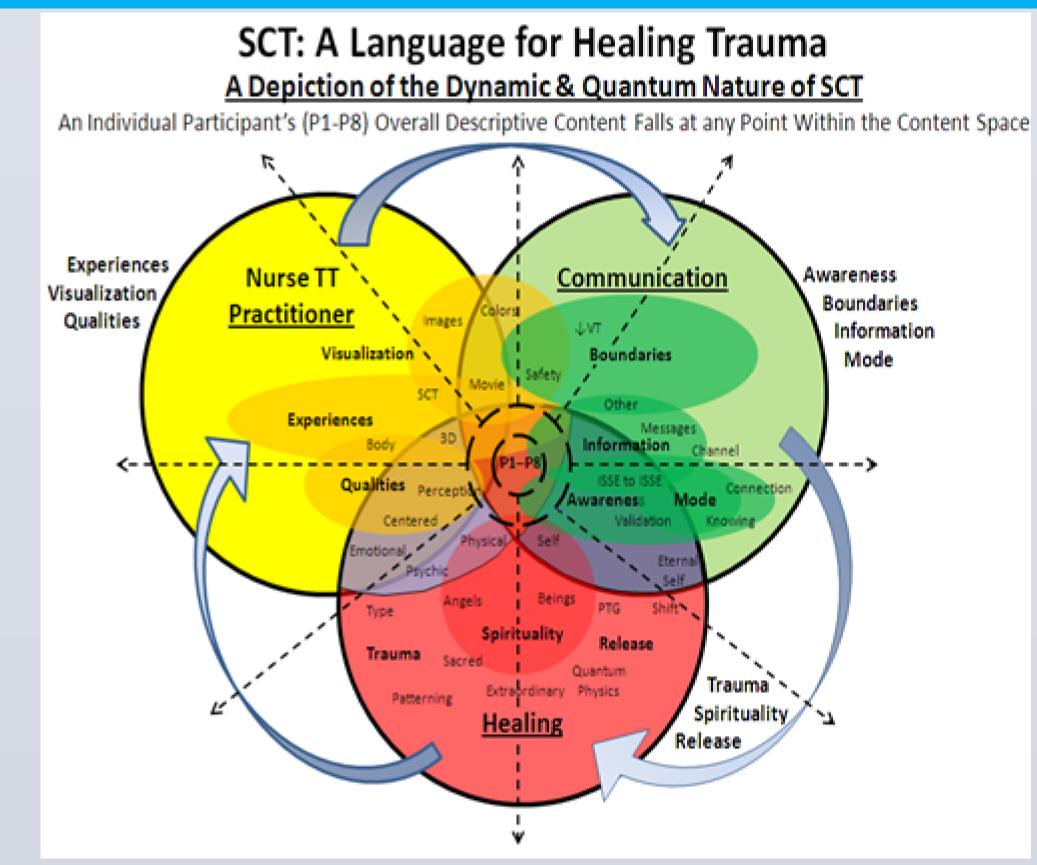
## Perception:

<u>Participant 7</u>: "In general I have found that prickling sensations (in my hands) come only from cancer."

# RESULTS

- •Codes & 10 subcategories grounded exclusively in the data → 3 categories → Emergent theme, "SCT: A Language for Healing Trauma"
- SCT was found to be a factor in the healing of trauma that emanated from the verbal & nonverbal communication of 1 group of nurse TT practitioners in interaction with their traumatized clients

# CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MAJOR THEME



# **CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

- Holistic, general, advanced clinical nursing Practice & Education
- Adjunct to traditional exposure-based therapies
- Aligned with current trends in trauma therapy: non-exposure based;

   ↓ talk therapy (VOICES of 911)
- SCT awareness can ↓ vicarious traumatization (VT) in clinicians

# **CONTACT INFORMATION & REFERENCES**

cmj@monetti.com

http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Somatic-Countertransference-Experiences.pdf