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KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

of

Natalie M. Ricciutti

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Counselor Education and Supervision

**DIFFERENCES IN STIGMA EXPERIENCED BY
LICENSED COUNSELORS TOWARD SUBSTANCE
USE DISORDERS AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS**

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

10:00 AM

White Hall 408A (Dean's Conference Room)

Kent State University

Natalie M. Ricciutti

M.S.Ed., Clinical Mental Health Counseling,
Youngstown State University, 2018

B.S., Psychology,
The University of Mount Union, 2016

Natalie has been a practicing counselor in private practice settings for four years and considers herself to be a lifelong learner and researcher. Her specialty interests include the treatment of addictions, including both substance use disorders and process/behavioral addictions, and the importance of developing readiness across communities in order to address addiction issues. During her four years completing her doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision from Kent State University, Natalie has grown to value supervising counselor trainees and has worked to be a leader in various organizations within the profession. She enjoys teaching future counselors about the impact and treatment of addictions, which she has done several times during her doctoral student and candidacy periods.

Natalie's primary joy is conducting original research and writing the results for publication, and she has received numerous opportunities to do so throughout her time at Kent State University. She has also had the privilege of presenting at national, regional, and statewide professional conferences. Natalie looks forward to continuing her work as a research, teacher, leader, and supervisor as an Assistant Professor and Counselor Educator at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in August.

Differences in Stigma Experienced by Licensed Counselors Toward Substance Use Disorders and Behavioral Disorders

The first purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the existing stigma held by mental health counselors and chemical dependency counselors toward clients with substance use disorders (SUDs) and process/behavioral addictions (PBAs). The second purpose of this study was to explore predictors of stigmatizing attitudes toward clients with SUDs or PBAs. The final purpose of this study was to explore if mental health counselors experience a difference in their stigma between clients with SUDs and clients with PBAs.

Mental health counselors and chemical dependency counselors were surveyed about potential predictors of stigma and if they led to an increase or decrease in stigma. They were surveyed about their stigma toward clients with SUDs and clients with PBAs. The instruments used were the Perceived Stigma of Substance Abuse Scale (Luomo et al., 2010), the Substance-Related Terminology Stigma Scale (Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly & Westerhoff, 2010), and the Behavior-Related Terminology Stigma Scale (adapted from Kelly et al., 2010).

The results determined that some counselors continue to hold stigma toward individuals with SUDs, despite numerous educational opportunities. It was found that none of the factors were predictive of stigma toward individuals with SUDs. Finally, the participants did not hold differences in stigma between clients with SUDs and clients with PBAs. These findings have implications on the existing academic and continuing educational opportunities counselors receive about addictions.