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## Vicarious Traumatic Stress in Clinical Social Work: Psychological and Transformational Effects of Trauma Work on Practitioners

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss the concept of vicarious traumatic stress and its psychological as well as transformational effects on clinical workers, who are constantly interrelating with traumatized clients. To accomplish this purpose, this paper focuses on the Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CSDT), the theoretical framework of the vicarious traumatization effects, and critically examines its theoretical coherence.

First, this paper reviews the previous conceptualizations regarding the psychological effects of clinical work on practitioners. These are: 1) countertransference, 2) burnout, and 3) secondary traumatization. The concept of vicarious traumatization is closely reviewed through contrasting with these conceptualizations. Secondly, the CSDT is introduced by means of focusing on its theoretical assumption, scope and framework, body of knowledge, and previous empirical studies. Thirdly, several theoretical as well as practical issues in CSDT are analyzed from clinical perspective. Finally, the applicability of the hermeneutic approach to the empirical studies of CSDT is discussed.

**Key words:** Vicarious traumatic stress, Constructivist Self-Development Theory, Hermeneutic approach