The Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Department of Psychology

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2009 University of Victoria MSc
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“Storytelling with cultural tools: Children’s engagement with cultural features of oral traditions in First Nations cultural education programs”

Friday, August 9, 2013
9:30 AM
UVC, room A207a

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Christopher Lalonde, Department of Psychology, UVic (Supervisor)
Dr. Ulrich Mueller, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)
Dr. E. Anne Marshall, Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

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Dr. Robert Anthony, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic
Abstract

This dissertation presents a comparative case-study of how two groups of culturally diverse elementary school students engage with particular forms of narrative practice shared by cultural educators through First Nations cultural education programs. The project develops the argument that different cultures afford different symbolic resources useful in “structuring” and “organizing” experience for individuals and that one important way in which these “possible worlds” are shared in a community is through storytelling. To develop this argument the project was structured around two main research questions: 1) what are the forms and functions of narrative practices children experience during the First Nations cultural education programs? And 2) how do children “echo” and “transform” these narrative practices through their participation in the narrative activities organized around the programs? Participants in the project were two First Nations cultural educators conducting cultural education programs in public schools who participated as research partners, as well as 16 students from a grade 1 classroom (Class A) who participated in the first educator’s program and 15 students from a grade 4 classroom (Class B) who participated in the second educator’s program. Data for this project came from a multiple sources and analysis focused especially on stories told from the cultural educators during their programs as well as retellings of these stories from students in the two classrooms. In addition, data was collected from interviews and discussions with the cultural educators and student participants, ethnographic field notes on the cultural education programs and the classroom communities as well as discussions with classroom teachers. This additional data was integrated into the project at various points to support interpretations. An ethnopoetic or verse analysis (Hymes, 1981, 1996, 2003) of stories told by the cultural educators revealed recurring patterns in the stories that both educators employed for particular rhetorical effects. In addition, these patterns revealed a number of “cultural features” of the storytelling performances that the educators used to emphasize specific points, to make parts of the stories especially memorable for the audience and to share lessons with the audience. Verse analyses of students’ story-retellings revealed a number of ways in which these students echoed and transformed these cultural features and made use
of them to share the meaning or lesson of the stories with their audience. Finally, comparative analyses of story-retellings from the differently aged students in the two classrooms through a number of analytical frameworks found that the retellings from grade 4 students were more complex in a number of ways, but also that students in both classrooms skillfully employed these different forms of narrative resources. The results reported in this study suggest that students were making use of the space provided in the cultural education programs to explore particular forms of narrative practice shared by the cultural educators and that they were making use of these narrative resources in meaningful ways to share lessons with their audience.

**Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships**

2011  Doctoral Fellowship from SSHRC  
2011  Jacobs Foundation International Emerging Scholar Award from the Jean Piaget Society  
2009/10  Doctoral Fellowship from the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research

**Presentations**


**Publications**

