Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

SARAH BONSON KURKI

MA (University of Victoria, 2011)
BEd (Lakehead University, 1998)
BA (Lakehead University, 1998)

“More than ‘Selfies and Starbucks’: A Feminist Exploration of Adolescent Girls’ Photographic Nexuses”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Tuesday, April 5, 2016
10:30am
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Mike Emme, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UVic (Member)
Dr. Darlene Clover, Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Claudia Mitchell, Faculty of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Scott Woodcock, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Incredibly harmful hegemonic norms are being disseminated through postfeminist media and female adolescents are being targeted and shaped by them in alarming ways. Given this current cultural climate, it is timely and critical to identify how new literacies, popular media, and institutional sexism are impacting young women’s lives, their understanding of the world, and of themselves. In this arts-based study the author investigated teen girls’ photographs and accompanying stories to determine which nexuses exist between the participants, their photographs, and their life experiences in order to discover in what ways their photography revealed elements of their identities. Critical feminist theory and visual narrative inquiry informed this SSHRC funded research in which photo elicitation was conducted with 8 teen girls over a period of 6 months. Findings revealed that within the main nexuses of appearance, media, and identity the themes of fetishization, post-feminism influences, and control were complexly interwoven. By exploring the girls’ photographs and investigating the stories and interpretations associated with them, it was possible to develop insight into how youth were using visual media to document and understand their life experiences and create their identities. Ongoing conversation with the participants about their images provided an opportunity for them to consider how their photographic images represented (or misrepresented) their identities. This feminist research allowed for experimentation, reflection, and generative knowledge to occur for the participants. It invites the reader into the blurred boundary between public space, cultural norms and societal expectations, and the private worlds, personal ideas and identities in which adolescent girls live as they mature into young adults.