Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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“Tough Parts, Connections, Interruptions, and Courage”: Conversations with Beginning Early Childhood Educators

School of Child and Youth Care

August 17, 2017
3:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
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Dr. Enid Elliot, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

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Dr. Marina Bettaglio, Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies, UVic

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on beginning early childhood educators and their stories, contributing to an area in the literature that has not been researched extensively. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) philosophical concepts of assemblage and a rhizome underpin the methodological and theoretical threads in this study, which explores the following research questions: What are the possibilities of conversations when beginning early childhood educators get together? What conditions are needed for beginning educators to stay excited and engaged in their work?

With intention to move beyond an individualistic approach of considering educators as “subjects” telling their individual stories, this study focuses on transcripts, stories, audio recordings, images, materials, the researcher’s memories and stories, related texts, and concepts as vital parts of the assemblage, directing attention to what emerges through connections between the elements. To explore the research questions, four 90-minute group conversation sessions were conducted with four early childhood educators who had been working in the field between one and two years. Collage was used as part of group conversation sessions, to pay attention to what unfolded through engaging with materials and one another.

Bringing together elements of rhizomatic and narrative approaches in the data analysis highlights the importance of listening deeply, attending to one another, and developing trust to engage in genuine conversations from the heart to form caring relations, as well as directing attention to the complexities and tensions of educators’ practice. The results of the study also point in the direction of switching focus from an individualistic, fast-paced professional development approach to meaningful collective opportunities for professional learning, attending to the concept of time as relational. The study suggests creating a network of educators to continue genuine conversations and nurture connections that will help educators to stay excited and engaged in their work.

Keywords: Beginning early childhood educators, assemblage, rhizomatic, narrative, collage