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

HOLLY HEATH

BSc (University of Northern British Columbia, 2007)

“Care-full: Exploring the Health and Wellness Issues Facing Women Caregivers”

Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education

Wednesday, April 27, 2016
1:00pm
McKinnon Building
Room 0025

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Joan Higgins, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Sandra Hundza, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Lynne Young, Department of Nursing, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Scott McIndoe, Department of Chemistry, UVic

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

Informal caregiving for aging Canadians plays a vital role in the health care system, and scholars have noted the urgency and primacy of studying this important contribution provided by a relatively invisible cadre of volunteers, family members and friends. Despite the recent attention caregiving has received in the scholarly literature, it is dominated by quantitative research. The purpose of the phenomenological inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of female caregivers in terms of their perspectives on caregiving and their own personal health and wellness. A sample of seven female caregivers was obtained using a combination of both purposive and snowball sampling. Through semi-structured interviews participants were asked to describe their experiences as a caregiver. Guided by van Manen’s (1984/1990) method to phenomenology one major theme “one day at a time” emerged from the data. Within this overarching narrative were three sub-themes: “A valuable endeavour”, “Transitions”, and “Support” found to characterize their caregiving realities including both positive and negative aspects. Capturing a rich understanding of the lived experience of female caregivers, intentionally including and honouring their voices, can inform the design and implementation of health promoting policies, programs, and interventions, as well as identify avenues and approaches to future research.

Keywords: caregiver; health and wellness; lived experience; phenomenology