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

of

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“What Makes a Father? A Socially Constructed Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity”

School of Child and Youth Care

Wednesday, April 22, 2015
1:30pm
Human and Social Development Building
Room A402d

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Daniel Scott, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Tim Black, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Allan Mitchell, Department of English, UVic

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

This study explores how fathers exist within socially constructed micro and macro systems and are positioned within a discourse on gendered masculinity. Seven fathers from the Nanaimo, B.C. region volunteered to participate in two focus groups, to discuss “what makes a father”. An exploration of the men’s lived experiences reflected on memories from childhood that influenced choices they make in fatherhood. Through generative exchanges and personal narratives subjective and evolved perspectives on gender binaries, masculine stereotypes and traditional belief systems were articulated. The compilation and analysis of data attempts to disrupt preconceived notions of masculinity in the 21st century. Based on the focus group data the study reveals roles that challenge traditional paternal archetypes relevant to parental relationships and demonstrates that contemporary fathers continue to evolve and navigate what is being referred to as “new” fatherhood. The study contributes to the research on fathers as an exclusive research subject and their understanding of fatherhood in their own terms. The fathers in this study are challenging antiquated belief systems of how men are supposed to be within the structures of gendered masculinity. The study indicates there is no one-way or right way to be a dad and the curiosity and a conscious effort to trouble heteronormative archetypes by the participants indicates that men create space to chose to father according to their subjective experiences.

Keywords. Father, fatherhood, gendered masculinity and social construction.