Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts
of
AMARENS MATTHIESEN
BA (University of Dundee, 2013)
“Working with Diversity: The Experiences of Child Life Specialists”
School of Child & Youth Care
Thursday, April 20, 2017
1:00PM
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Douglas Magnuson, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Roy Ferguson, School of Child & Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Rick Green, School of Kinesiology, University of Southern Mississippi

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen Urbanoski, School of Public Health & Social Policy, UVic

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

Canada’s increasingly diverse population requires healthcare providers to become responsive to cultural differences within the provision of healthcare services, including Child Life Specialists (CLSs), who are committed to providing psychosocial and family-centered care to hospitalized children and their families. A fundamental process of family-centered care involves responding to ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity of patients and their families. The field of child life generally remains under-researched and, in particular, studies to support the link between child life practice and culturally adapted care are lacking. To address this gap, this study explores the ways in which CLSs perceive and conceptualize the construct of diversity in their practice by utilizing cultural safety as a guiding framework. Through an exploratory research approach, semi-structured interviews with six CLSs working at a prominent children's hospital in Alberta, Canada, were completed. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data indicated that CLSs conceptualized culture as a broad construct that is not limited to factors associated with ethnicity. Although CLSs also experienced various challenges in their practice as a result of cultural factors, their perceived level of comfort, confidence and desire to overcome such challenges were highly notable. This study also yielded insight into institutional- and practice-level resources and strategies that may improve the ability of CLSs to provide culturally-safe care.

Keywords: child life specialist, cultural safety, culture, diversity, healthcare