



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

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

of

SARAH BONNELL

BA (University of Victoria, 2009)

**“Exploring the Healing Effects of Yoga for Trauma in Children and Youth: The
Stories of Yoga Instructors”**

School of Child and Youth Care

Tuesday, April 26, 2016

1:00PM

Human and Social Development Building
Room A373

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Daniel Scott, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Marie Hoskins, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Anne Bruce, School of Nursing, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Robin Hicks, Department of Chemistry, UVic

Abstract

Yoga as a therapeutic modality for treating trauma is currently emerging as an important topic of research with several new studies being produced to analyze its effectiveness on varying populations of traumatized individuals. Research is beginning to demonstrate that individuals who suffer the effects of trauma have often experienced several negative events that accumulate over the course of one's lifetime. It has been displayed that when treated early, the adverse effects of trauma may be much less debilitating. Recent studies indicate traumatic memories are often stored within the body and are difficult to recall through cognition alone. Therefore, somatic therapies such as yoga are proving to be an effective means of working through this unresolved trauma. Using a constructivist and postmodernist lens with a narrative methodology, this study explores the impact of yoga on children and youth who have experienced trauma as witnessed by yoga instructors teaching to these populations. Seven participants who reside in British Columbia, volunteered to share their stories and experiences through individual semi-structured interviews. The narratives highlight a potential pathway to healing trauma through several shared factors. These common threads indicate that yoga can provide children and youth a safe space to explore their bodies, develop a sense of community and belonging among peers, as well as engage in a mindfulness practice that incorporates several healing factors such as asana (the physical postures of yoga) and pranayama (connecting to one's breath). Opening to vulnerability was another common thread indicated as a necessary component to healing that occurred for many children and youth throughout the practice of yoga. This study contributes to the growing research of yoga as a therapeutic modality for healing trauma in children and youth.