Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Public Health

of

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BHSsc (University of Ottawa, 2014)

“A Place “I Feel is Home”: The Meaning of Home and Implications for Health Among People Living with HIV/AIDS in the Vancouver Area”

School of Public Health and Social Policy

Monday, April 23, 2018
10:00 a.m.
Human and Social Development Building
Room B202

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Catherine Worthington, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria
(Supervisor)
Dr. Heather Picotte, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:
Dr. Denise Cloutier, Department of Geography, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Patricia MacKenzie, School of Social Work, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Background: Housing continues to be one of the most significant unmet needs for many people living with HIV/AIDS in British Columbia. While there has been a focus on documenting the material aspects of housing and housing extremes (i.e., homelessness), there are important gaps in our understanding of the complex relationship between housing and health for people living with HIV/AIDS. The aim of this research was to illuminate the diversity of lived experiences, the variety of housing situations in Greater Vancouver (GV), the ways in which people living with HIV/AIDS construct meanings of home, and how these factors interact with health.

Methods: This thesis reports on a secondary analysis of individual interviews from the Positive Living, Positive Homes research study. Community-based research approaches were used to explore a variety of lived experiences across a continuum of housing situations, while promoting collaborative inquiry among community and academic research team members. For this analysis, a purposively selected sample of 10 transcripts was drawn from 53 semi-structured qualitative interviews with people living with HIV/AIDS in GV. Transcripts were analyzed using a grounded theory approach to explore how people constructed the meaning of home, and how people living with HIV/AIDS perceived the various elements of their home environment to interact with their health and wellbeing.

Results: The participants (5 Caucasians, 3 Indigenous persons, 1 Chinese-Canadian and 1 African refugee; 4 females, 1 trans-female, and 4 males) lived in a range of housing situations (market rental, subsidized, supportive, and precarious housing). Results of a grounded theory analysis showed that even when people had access to four-walled housing structures, they didn’t necessarily feel that their living environment was safe, secure, or conducive to having their health and social needs met. Exploring how people define home and their conditions for this designation revealed the ways in which people manage their living spaces to foster feelings of autonomy, security, constancy, and opportunities to strengthen their identity.

Discussion: Understanding the distinction between housing and home, and the meaningful dimensions of peoples’ living environments, can help improve options for appropriate housing, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach. Furthermore, collaborative inquiry will help address the action-oriented needs of the research findings through community-academic partnerships, and increased engagement in policy and advocacy.