



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MN (University of Victoria, 2009)
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“Struggling to Breathe: Exploring Nurses’ Experience of Infant Feeding Support”

School of Nursing

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

10:00AM

David Turpin Building

Room A144

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Carol McDonald, School of Nursing, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Karen MacKinnon, School of Nursing, UVic (Member)

Dr. Annalee Lepp, Women’s Studies Program, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Nancy Johnston, School of Nursing, York University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Margaret Cameron, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Abstract

The successful transition to motherhood can be associated with the experience of infant feeding, and women's views of whether that experience has been positive or negative can shape the mothering experience. However, nurses' engagement with best practice breastfeeding promotion may elicit negative responses from women who are either unsuccessful in their attempts to breastfeed, or do not breastfeed for other reasons. Are nurses adequately prepared or supported to deal with the variety of infant feeding challenges that inevitably arise in perinatal practice settings? For example, Canadian perinatal nurses are expected to conform to WHO-conceived Baby Friendly expectations to disseminate evidence that pertains to the health risks of introducing formula to infants. However, in some circumstances, infant formula is recommended by practitioners in order to provide crucial hydration and/or nourishment, which destabilizes the discourse of risk, and creates confusion for mothers. Questions also arise about the appropriateness of nurses applying WHO guidelines to every woman without first considering intersectional realities which may not align with BF recommendations to breastfeed for six months and beyond. These questions, and others, informed the research question: "What is nurses' experience of infant feeding support?" Eleven perinatal nurses from across Canada were interviewed. The conversations were interpreted using Gadamerian hermeneutic methodology. Participants described a variety of practices and dilemmas that they associate with infant feeding "support," highlighting complex and contradictory forces that are at play for nurses involved in infant feeding support as well as the unintended and negative consequences of following BF best practice guidelines.