



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

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**“The heART of Social Movement and Learning”**

Interdisciplinary Studies

Friday, November 25, 2016

10:00AM

David Turpin Building

Room B211

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jutta Gutberlet, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Budd Hall, School of Public Administration, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Nídia N. Pontuschka, Universidade de São Paulo (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Jorge Sousa, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Leslee Francis Pelton, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

## **Abstract**

Worldwide, the collection, separation, and sales of recyclable materials is a survival strategy for many unemployed and impoverished families, especially in urban landscapes. They are called recyclers, and their work is often associated with social exclusion objectively manifested through discrimination by the public, which negatively impacts recyclers' perceptions of their own self-worth. Discrimination places the recyclers within a marginalized social space and perpetuates poverty and social inequity. Such discrimination is best evidenced by the lack of open dialogue between recyclers and the public. The present research was designed to open spaces for these dialogues to occur, with the ultimate goal of decreasing discrimination suffered by the recyclers from the greater metropolitan region of São Paulo, Brazil.

Working collaboratively with recyclers that are affiliated with the Brazilian National Recycling Social Movement (MNCR), and using arts-based research interwoven with theories of social movement, environmental adult education and transformation, I explore the learning that goes along when we use visual arts to bridge the gap between the recyclers and public. During seven months (March–September, 2012), 50 recyclers participated in three different arts-based workshops (abstract painting, impressionism painting, and mosaic) and seven art exhibits in different cities in Brazil. These art workshops and exhibits were video and audio recorded and represent the primary data source in this research project. Discourse analysis combined with a cognitive developmental approach to understand peoples' free conversation was used as an analytical tool to explore the recorded materials.

The artworks produced in this research illustrate recyclers' stories of poverty, social exclusion, and their victories toward a better future for themselves. The process of creating and exhibiting their paintings mediated the construction of their visual thought, and in this way, they were able to (re)imagine a different reality for themselves. This empowered recyclers because it added value to their work as environmental agents, increasing their sense of self-worth. Additionally, through the art-making process, it was possible to identify moments of realization in one's life (i.e., epiphanies). By mapping out epiphanies throughout the lifespan of an individual, we can explore their moments of transformation, which is critical in environmental adult education processes.

Finally, my findings suggest that community art exhibits are dialogical spaces, where knowledge is co-constructed and mobilized. These exhibits are also alternative sources for income generation for the recyclers and are in fact, environmental adult education practices.