



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

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**“Queering as a Critical Imagination: Educators Envisioning *Queering Schools Praxis* Through Critical Participatory Action Research”**

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Tuesday, June 25, 2019  
3:00 P.M.  
MacLaurin Building  
Room A341

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Lindsay Herriot, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)

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Dr. Darlene Clover, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

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Dr. Juergen Ehlting, Department of Biology, UVic

## Abstract

It is well documented that hetero/cisnormativity is prevalent in schools. Queerness predominantly enters schools through anti-Queerphobia work, efforts to protect and include “at risk” gender and sexually creative youth from overt violence and discrimination. ‘Normative’ conceptions about gender and sexuality, however, are not just present in overt gender policing; they lurk in how Queer (LGBTQIA2S+) people are constructed as (in)visible, ‘humorous’, and brave/excessive in and around schools. Hetero/cisnormativity – a hegemonic discourse that interlocks with colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism – is at the heart of why gender and sexually expansive people are not thriving in schools. Mainstream efforts to protect and include Queer people (particularly youth) do not combat hetero/cisnormativity. By focusing solely on the ways that Queer youth are suffering in schools, these strategies absolve schools of looking deeply at how they (re)produce norms and hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationships through space, curriculum, and pedagogy that negatively impact everyone. Through a five-month critical participatory action research (CPAR) project, informed by queer and feminist frameworks, nine activist educators who formed the *Queering Schools Collective*, explore ways that Queerness/queerness does and can exist in schools beyond protective and assimilationist mainstream efforts. Educators Bridget, Kat, Gabby, Lauren, Max, Gayle, Reagan, Ronnie and Sarah co-researched ways to queer schools through examining the following concepts: inclusion, queerness/queering, and queering schools (space, pedagogy, and curriculum). Analyzing individual interviews, focus group meetings, and select journal entries, this thesis proposes that *queering* is an orientation towards desire, hope, and thriving; it rejects Queer deficiency narratives and positions queerness as non-dominant ways of being, acting, knowing, and valuing. This thesis likewise conceptualizes *queering schools praxis* as a flexible, situational process that engages multiple strategies concerned with disruption, reciprocity, and care. Finally, through interpreting collective members’ observations about the process, this thesis positions radical community spaces, where people can dream and strategize, as crucial for enabling *queering school praxis*.