



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

SALLY-ANNE HAUG

BA (Douglas College, 2009)

“Mental Illness Stigma: Experiences of Youth with a Mental Disorder”

School of Child and Youth Care

Thursday, January 10, 2019

1:30 P.M.

David Strong Building

Room C124

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jessica Ball, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Marie Hoskins, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Patricia MacKenzie, School of Social Work, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Noreen Frisch, School of Nursing, UVic

Abstract

Canadian society continues to stigmatize individuals with mental illness, despite the prevalence of mental illness in the population, decades of advocacy to combat mental illness stigma, and known negative sequelae of experiences of stigma by people affected by a mental illness. One negative impact of stigma is internalization of negative connotations attached to mental illness. Although there is extensive research on the stigma of mental illness, there is little information specifically about how youth with mental illness perceive the stigma of mental illness and how they respond to it. The current research sought to understand how youth who self-identify as having a mental illness experienced, perceived and internalized the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination of the stigma of mental illness. A simple content categorization method was used to identify key themes in the transcribed interviews of eleven youth in Vancouver Canada who identified as having mental illness. Qualitative analysis identified that the most frequent perpetrators of public stigma included casual acquaintances, family, friends, school staff, mental health professionals and authority figures. Youths' accounts linked mental illness stigma with low mental health literacy, delayed mental health treatment and a low quality of life. The findings are considered with reference to implications for prevention of stigma, including enhanced mental health literacy for mental health professionals and the public aimed at increased understanding, sensitivity and empowerment of youth with mental illness and their families.

Keywords: mental illness, mental health literacy, adolescence, youth, adolescent, stigma, self-stigma, medication, mental disorders, depression, disclosure.