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

of

LIAM A. LAW

BEd University of Victoria. 2012
BSc University of Calgary, 2009

“The Experience of Fathers with Children in Substance-Use Treatment”

Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies

Wednesday, April 8, 2020
1:00pm
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Timothy Black, Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Fred Chou, Department of Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Rebecca Hudson Breen, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Francis Lau, School of Health Information Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The lack of research attention focused on fathers with children in substance-use treatment is problematic. This is especially apparent when considering the significant harms associated with adolescent drug and alcohol use contrasted against the evidence suggesting parental engagement in youth substance-use treatment is beneficial, which is confounded by disproportionately low rates of father engagement. The literature review of the current study affirms the capability of fathers to be excellent parents, while positioning them in a social context where hegemonic masculinity and gender inequality in parenting exists in tension with an evolving culture of contemporary nurturant fathering. Yet, in the family systems context of youth substance-use treatment, where many of these cultural complexities intersect, no study has asked fathers about their experience. The current study uses narrative interviews and thematic analysis to construct themes in response to the question “what are the experiences of fathers with children in substance-use treatment?” They include: (a) Someone Else Opened the Door, (b) They Have Reservations About Engaging in Treatment, (c) They are Devoted to Their Children, (d) Their Connections to their Children Improved, (e) Their Co-Parenting Relationships Added Stress, (f) Their Relationships with Co-Parents Improved, (g) They Find that Part of the Process Remains a Mystery, (h) They Felt Appreciation. Two additional incidental findings were generated and are (a) They Felt Influenced by Traditional Gender Expectations, and (b) They Have Had Their Own Experience with Substance-Use. This is the first study to focus on fathers in the context of youth and family substance-use. In doing so, it makes contributions to the associated literature that will help support families engaged in substance-use treatment, the helping professionals with whom they work, and most importantly, fathers in their efforts to be good parents.