Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Social Work of

ALYX MacADAMS

BA (McGill University, 2011)

“Contesting Care: Applying a critical social citizenship lens to care for trans children”

School of Social Work

Friday, July 31, 2020
1:00 P.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Cindy Holmes, School of Social Work, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha, School of Social Work, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Bruce Wallace, School of Social Work, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Ann Travers, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Ruthanne Tobin, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Recent years have seen an unprecedented paradigm shift wherein pathologizing approaches to caring for trans children have been contested by efforts to accept and affirm trans children as their self-determined gender. This has resulted in a mainstreaming of gender affirming and de-pathologizing approaches to caring for trans children. While gender affirming care undoubtedly benefits many trans children, this research analyzes the ways in which practices and delivery of gender affirming care can be exclusionary of children who do not fit within a normative, binary, medicalized, white, and middle-class conceptualization of trans childhood. Applying critical social citizenship as a theoretical framework, this research argues that care for trans children is shaped through a complex interweaving of normative liberal citizenship regimes, professional and social care practices, and relational care practices that seek to recognize and create space for children to belong as their self-determined gender.

Using a community-based research methodology to engage with trans youth and supportive parent caregivers around their experiences of care, this study sought to a) better understand how the contested landscape of care impacts the lives of trans children and b) offer possibilities for transforming care for trans children. Centring the voices and experiences of trans youth and parents, this research argues that trans children face exclusions and barriers when accessing care. This research then discusses what relational care practices, as shared in participant narratives, offer for envisioning care possibilities that centre trans children’s agency and gender self-determination. The outcome of this research is a vision of care for trans children that is rearticulated through a critical theorization of trans children’s citizenship.