



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

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MEd (University of Victoria, 2002)

BFA (University of Victoria, 1998)

**“Moving forwards backwards: Exploring the impact of active
engagement in reminiscence theatre with older adults in residential
care with mild to moderate cognitive impairment”**

Social Dimensions of Health Program

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

2:30 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B021

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Warwick Dobson, Department of Theatre, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Holly Tuokko, Department of Psychology, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Michael Hayes, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Professor David Barnet, Department of Drama, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Catherine McGregor, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Abstract

This descriptive ethno-theatre case study explored the impact of intergenerational engagement through a reminiscence theatre arts initiative on the psychosocial quality of life for older adults with mild to moderate cognitive decline. Study participants were comprised of 11 adults 65 years and older residing in a dementia-specific residential care facility unit, and 13 University of Victoria Theatre students. Both qualitative and quantitative procedures were integrated into the case study. Qualitative processes consisted of older adult life history interview transcriptions, ethno-theatre field notes of theatre devising and performance processes, and post-program drama evaluations. Quantitative measures included pre- and post-administered instruments: CASP-19; Alzheimer's Disease-related Quality of Life (ADRQL) – Revised; and older adult health perception surveys. Overall, it appears from the data that active engagement in reminiscence theatre (the process of creating and performing theatre from real life memories and stories) results in a positive impact on older adults' well-being – increased self-esteem, elevated mood and social engagement, decreased isolation and boredom, and desire to continue with activities.

This study's findings suggest that the integration of reminiscence arts initiatives into residential care plans for older adults with mild to moderate cognitive impairment can substantially enhance psychosocial quality of life. These findings are consistent with reminiscence and life review theory in that intergenerational engagement in these processes promotes healthy aging. This study demonstrated that intergenerational connection between young and older adults through drama and storytelling activities occurred. The creative reciprocal initiatives of reminiscence arts in turn fostered a context for social and emotional engagement that appeared to reduce older adults' isolation.