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

of

JESSICA SAHLSTROM

BA (University of Victoria, 2011)

“Dream/Hope/Love/Create/Act (and back): A Collaboration in the Dis/Ability Field”

School of Child and Youth Care

Tuesday, September 3, 2019
12:30 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Michael Prince, Faculty of Human and Social Development, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. A. Coleman Nye, Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, Simon Fraser University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Craig Brown, Division of Medical Sciences, UVic

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

Dream/Hope/Love/Create/Act (and back) is a collaborative arts-based research project on the experiences that support workers have with enacting support, care and education practices in the disability field. Five support workers in the disability field were interviewed using arts-based and collaborative methods. Conversations focused on the disciplining power that policies, systems and structures have over the support practices provided to young people labeled with an intellectual disability. Questions were formulated on support worker experiences with enacting care, behaviour support, and curriculum. The following four issues were central to the inquiry: child development and the pressure for language acquisition; issues of consent in everyday practice and clinical spaces; the creation and enactment of behaviour plans; and disability labels and the diagnosis process. The in-depth, unstructured arts-based individual and group conversations were collaboratively designed with research participants, and topics of care, support and professional ethics were intentionally politicized. Conversations took place during the creation of poetry, painting and collage to grapple with practitioners’ own power in shaping the worlds of young people. By way of experimenting with diffractive approaches to analysis, assemblages of poetry, art and theory were created as thresholds for entry into the larger thesis assemblage. Transcripts and art were analyzed while thinking with various theoretical threads, with the purpose to blur and resist harmful and normalizing support practices. To achieve this, analyses were framed by critical disability studies, feminism, queer theory, critical race theory and social justice. This study shows that support workers are honouring the bodies and communications of resistance of the young people with disabilities they support. This study also shows support workers as deeply self-reflexive as they engage in critical practices in resistance to ableism. Dream/Hope/Love/Create/Act (and back) has implications for informing research, training and education that grow support work practices to becoming increasingly consensual and designed with and for young people with a variety of disability labels.