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

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“A feminist post structural analysis of Trauma Informed Care policies in BC”

Social Dimensions of Health Program

Wednesday, August 25, 2021
10:00 A.M.
Conducted Virtually

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Susan Strega, School of Social Work, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Catherine Worthington, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Michael Prince, Faculty of Human and Social Development, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Catrina Brown, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Astri Wright, Department of Art History and Visual Studies, UVic

Dr. Robin G. Hicks, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract
My study examines trauma informed practice (TIP) policies in BC, Canada. My chosen methodology, what is the problem represented to be (WPR) (Bacchi 2009), makes politics visible in policies. I am interested in the effects of trauma policies on women who experience male violence. How does discourse produce certain effects and constitute specific subjects within these texts?

I extend a politicized analysis of TIP policies, specifically, an in-depth feminist post structural analysis. I advance an understanding of the effects of policy, particularly for women who have experienced male violence and who receive services under the TIP guidelines. I note the absence of an intersectional analysis and the lack of attention paid to power relations, specifically associated with the provision of care within the health care system, the construction of the traumatized female subject and the absence of a social justice lens in TIP policies.

My study addresses the meanings, and resulting practices arising from the TIP policy and its impacts on women's lived experiences. My feminist post structural analysis provides a critique of TIP policies glaringly absent from the literature. I examine available literature, which evaluates TIP. My analysis deepens the understanding of the policy's inherent assumptions by revealing the problem of trauma, as represented in TIP policies.

I explore the emergence of the dominant concept of trauma in the completion of a genealogy of trauma. I uncover the commonly accepted trauma ethos, a set of principles and beliefs about violence against women that has set the path for a trauma discourse in BC's guidelines, policies, and programs. I explore my interest in the ontology of trauma, the nature of trauma itself and the way of being when trauma has occurred. While exploring this interest through a genealogy of trauma, I identify five historical figures; the traumatized female figure, the assaulted woman figure, the wounded veteran figure, the colonized Indigenous woman figure and the emancipated woman figure.

My study explores how women are obscured and invisible in policies intended to address violence against women. I demonstrate that this invisibility results in gender-neutral policies— if there is no gender-based violence – we, therefore, do not have to think of gender-based
treatment. The patriarchal erasure of women from trauma policies continually repositions what the problem is represented to be.

These policies constitute women as the less valued subjects, fundamentally damaged and flawed. Trauma policies shape women as people who can damage staff; assuming they are a source of trauma infection; they can infect staff with their trauma resulting in vicarious traumatization of staff. Trauma policies characterize the traumatized female subject as fundamentally different from the staff or the professional expert. Only certain kinds of women can be traumatized, the mentally ill and substance-using women. My study exposes the presupposition embedded in policies that only certain women are violated, and other women are unlike them. This trauma discourse is grounded in racism, colonialism and sexism, built on stereotypical patriarchal representations of women, resulting in the stigmatization of women who experience male violence.