

RESEARCH FOCUS

Rural Communities

- Possible selves (MA thesis)
- Life-Career Development and Planning of Rural Young Women (Doctoral SSHRC)
- Rural Possible Selves follow-up project
- Paths to the Future (SSHRC)
- Working Lives of Rural Women

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- Diagnostic Pilot Study (QA and Victoria FASD Community Circle)
- White Crow Village Camp: Effects on Caregivers (QA)
- White Crow Village Camp Volunteer Project (QA)
- CIHR Health Research Assistance Program: Transitions to Adulthood
- BC Child and Youth Health Research Network Grant: After Diagnosis



The Perspectives of Rural Youth in BC

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Research Questions

- **What are the life-career issues, supports, challenges and barriers for youth in small and rural communities?**
- **What has helped and will help youth to access the supports and to address the challenges and barriers?**
- **What resources exist for these youth, both internally and externally in their communities?**
- **How does gender and First Nations heritage impact the life-career choices and paths of youth living in small communities?**



“Bricolage” - Blended Approaches

- **The choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked and the questions depend on their context (Mason)**
- **Qualitative inquiry is often interdisciplinary and practitioners value a multi-method approach**
- **Community-based researchers are particularly committed to respectful engagement with their partners and research communities – this often involves negotiating multiple goals and methods**
- **The “real world” is multi-layered and holistic**

Research Method

- **Ethnographic-Narrative Approach**
- **Multiple data sources: narrative interviews, life-space mapping, poetry, photography, possible selves & survey**
- **School & community workshops for dissemination**
- **Over 80 individual interviews, 3 focus groups and an estimated 500 survey participants**
- **School and community workshops**
- **Communities in British Columbia: Kaslo, Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Alert Bay**



What is Ethnography?

- **The art and science of describing a group of culture (Fetterman, 1989)**
- **Explores the cultural context and meaning-within-context as well as illuminating the roots of power from which meaning and context grow (Boyle, 1994)**
- **Some describe it as “writing culture”**
- **Inductive process (generates new concepts)**



What is Ethnography?


Ethnography attempts to explain the web of interdependence of group behaviors and interactions.

- Is investigative**
- Uses the researcher as the primary tool of data collection**
- Uses rigorous research methods & detailed data collection techniques**
- Emphasizes and builds on perspectives of the people in the research settings (fieldwork)**
- Takes a holistic and comprehensive approach**



Ethnographic Research is used:

- **Define issues when the issues are not clear**
- **Grasp the worldview of individuals, families, and cultures from their viewpoint**
- **Identify participants and settings not yet known or identified**
- **Obtain introductions through gatekeepers/key informants**



Ethnography - In the Field

- **Be respectful and sensitive to community values, preferences, protocols, and procedures**
- **Keep your notebook with you at all times**
- **Write down quotes and exact words (if not taping)**
- **Negotiate anonymity and use of pseudonyms**
- **Describe behaviour in behavioural terms**
- **Record detailed descriptions**
- **Include date, time, location, etc when observing**
- **Review your notes daily and write summaries and impressions**



Ethnographic Data Collection

- **Observing and taking part in day-to-day activities in the community**
- **Ethnographic Interview**
- **Spatial map of community resources**
- **Community life-space mapping by individuals**
- **Fieldnotes**



Reflexivity

- **Rigorous and continual self-reflection about observations, subjectivities (“biases”), hunches, expectations, etc**
- **Create reflexive accounts that parallel field notes (what do you think about how the research is unfolding)**
- **Use the hermeneutic circle (whole-part-whole)**
- **Solicit help of key informants & research partners to review data and provide possible interpretations**
- **Consult with others on and off site**



What is Narrative Inquiry?

- **"Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).**
- **People's lives consist of stories.**
- **How we come to know our world and ourselves is through the telling of, listening to and re-telling of stories. (Polkinghorne)**



Assumptions of Narrative Inquiry

There is no objective truth that can be ultimately known in subjective human experience.

Humans make our own lives, and the lives of others, known through the stories we tell.

Interior reality is pluralistic, contextualized, and subjective.

Our stories reveal purposes and intentions as human beings.



Assumptions of Narrative Inquiry

Stories provide coherence and continuity to our experience

There can be no universal reader, no single unitary reading, or interpretation

Our stories are always recollections of experience and not the experience itself

Stories are situated within a cultural discourse (the link to ethnography)



Narrative Data Collection

- **Possible Selves Mapping**
- **Life-lines**
- **Photographic essays**
- **In-depth interviews**
- **Life turning points**



Narrative Challenges

- **Attempting to evolve a research question that will shed light on the phenomenon you want to study**
- **Conducting the interview in such a way that those stories will emerge**
- **When you invite a story – you enter an area of mystery – you don't know what will emerge**
- **Uneasy, at times, reality of co-constructing the story with the participant**

What is Ethnographic Narrative?

- A blending of ethnographic practices
 - Prolonged fieldwork
 - Engagement of the researcher in the research process
 - Multiple data collection strategies
 - Sensitivity to context and culture

AND

- Narrative inquiry
 - Participant stories
 - Focus on understanding meaning (intention & direction)
 - Crucial role of language

What are their challenges in transitioning to adulthood?

- Economic restructuring and business closures
- Reduction in resource-based industries such as fishing, forestry, mining, and farming
- Chronic unemployment and social assistance
- High youth unemployment
- Lack of affordable housing
- Limited social resources
- Risky behaviours
- Isolation

What are their challenges in transitioning to adulthood?

- Decreased expectations of attending post-secondary
- Lack of urban information & practical steps to move on
- Need for information about and access to apprenticeships and educational programs
- Difficulty letting go of community
- Not optimistic about future opportunities in their community
- Lack of employment opportunities for young women in their communities
- For young women educational capital is necessary
- Families lack economic resources



Themes from Youth

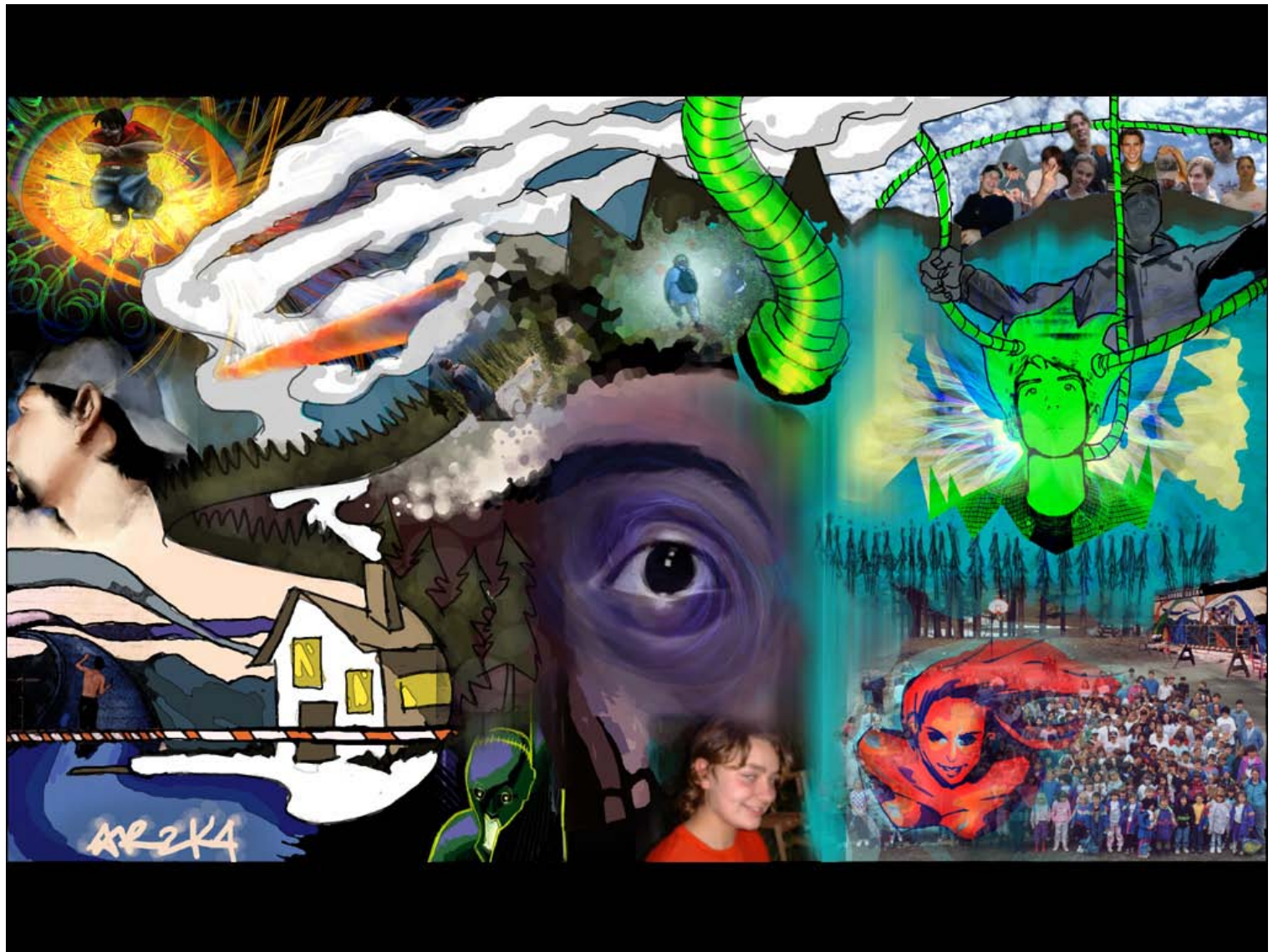
- Feel supported by and close to family: Parents most important influence on career exploration/decision making
- Attachment to rural setting & community
- Value high school completion, but question relevance of college/university
- Leaving offers opportunity, is often “expected”
- Feel pressure not to make mistakes about future
- Some youth feel a sense of hopelessness & an unfocused desire to “get out of here”
- At times they feel overlooked by their community
- Girls feel “tangled in relationships”



Words from Rural Youth

“You can’t aspire to what you don’t know” (Grace)

“I can’t imagine growing up anywhere else. I never want to lose touch with my childhood, because it’s made me who I am today.” (Tina)



Rural Voices

- *I think that if I had lived down there I would have just gone straight to college. But I didn't. And now I'm having a baby. (female, Alert Bay)*
- *People are starting to realize that there's becoming less and less things to do, without a trade or without education. I see a lot of people moving away, trying to recover what we didn't do when we were 18. (male, Alert Bay)*



Rural Voices

When there is violence, vandalism, or death in this town, it is always related to drugs and alcohol (male, Kaslo)

My hope is that I find some kind of work that will make me a solid living so I can raise a family, be able to afford a nice house. And my fears are that I'm going to live on a low income the rest of my life. (male, Kaslo)

What are their hopes for the future?

- **Relationships**: to be a good parent & have stable home; stay connected to friends and family
- **Lifestyle**: live in a clean beautiful place, be financially stable, travel and experience living in another country
- **Occupational**: professional, entrepreneur, artist, skilled worker

What are their fears for the future?

- **Loss of relationships**: to be alone and abandoned, to remain single, to lose friends and family through accidents
- **Loss of health**: to be beaten, to be physically or emotionally abused, to be in an accident, to be obese and out of shape, to become addicted to substances, and to experience workplace injuries.



Pathways to Adulthood

- **Prolonged transition to economic independence**
- **Prolonged independence from family responsibilities**
- **Cohabitation facilitates economic independence**
- **Young women not necessarily oriented towards marriage**
- **Pathways: traditionalist, goal-oriented, stayers, survivalists, and wanderers**



What we need to know

- **Understand community context**
- **Assessment of local opportunities**
- **Need for rural-based, locally developed career programs**
- **Provision of youth leadership opportunities**
- **Balance realism and possibilities: Youth need specific & practical information**
- **Rural links to educational institutions and ongoing support while attending post - secondary**



Who Am I?

I am the mountains that have endured the passage of time.

Mine shafts cut through me and my once pristine green quilt has been shaved in places so that soil spills down rushing streams into the valleys below.

My ridges are not quite so sharp and my pointed edges have been filed by the wind and rain and snow.

But I am all that is tenacious, persistent, robust, and hardy. I am the backbone of British Columbia, rated high among the beauties of the world.



Ethnographic-Narrative

- **If we were to conduct a small ethnographic narrative study of the group here today, what would we do?**
 - **Conceptualize the project (identify partners)**
 - **Contact and obtain permission**
 - **Gather information and reflect (throughout)**
 - **Identify key informants and potential participants**
 - **Discuss method and process**
 - **Narrative interviews (and other narrative data)**
 - **Analysis and interpretations**
 - **Write-up and dissemination**



Ethical Considerations

- **Honour others' experiences**
- **Consult locally and be transparent regarding process**
- **Think about possible impacts on yourself and the community/participants**
- **Negotiate requirements**
- **Make a contribution to the community**
- **Share the findings in ways that acknowledge the community/participants**



Dissemination

- **Regular newsletters to community**
- **Workshops: “Future Bound”**