

7. Fletcher, S. "It means more when you see it" Photovoice as individual and community witnessing- immigrant youth perspectives on stress. CASCA Victoria, BC, 2013 (Oral).
8. Fletcher, S. "Sometimes it's the little things" Preliminary Findings from Navigating Multiple Worlds Project International Qualitative Health Research Conference, Montreal, QC, October 22-26 2012 (Oral).
9. Fletcher, S. "The Navigating Multiple Worlds Project- Lessons learned and best practices for engaging youth in photovoice", Digital Stories as a Health Promotion Tool- CIHR funded National meeting, June 18 &19, Nanaimo BC, 2012 (Oral).
10. Fletcher, S. "Where is home? Using Arts-based approaches to engage newcomer youth. Enhancing social and cultural integration and creating welcoming communities" Metropolis Conference, Toronto ON Feb 29-March 3, 2012 (Oral).
11. Fletcher, S. "What's next? Working With and in the Unexpected; Participatory Research with Youth" CASCA Edmonton AB May 9-11, 2012 (Oral).
12. Fletcher, S "Picture This: Challenges and Strengths in Navigating Multiple Worlds" June 11-13 International Diversity Conference, Vancouver BC, 2012 (Oral).
13. Fletcher, S. & Kandil, Y. "Where is Home?"- Using theatre to facilitate the empowerment of immigrant youth to uncover challenges and opportunities that influence wellness, International Qualitative Health Research Conference, Vancouver BC, 2011 (Oral).

Publications

1. Fletcher, S. Stress and the 'Navigation of Multiple Worlds': Experiences of Immigrant Youth in Victoria, *Platform Journal*, Accepted **2014** University of Victoria.
2. Fletcher, S., Mullett, J., Beerman, S. The Value of a regional family practice residency training program site: perceptions of Physicians, residents and nurses, *Canadian Journal of Medical Education*, **2014** 60(1) e-457-e454.
3. Fletcher S. & NMW Research Team Imagine What it Would be Like: Navigating Multiple Worlds, Photobook: Victoria, BC. **2012**.
4. Mullett, J & Fletcher S. Action Research in Public Health, *Oxford Online Encyclopedia* **2011**.
5. VACCHO & Fletcher, S Celebrating Success- ten years of Community Control in Aboriginal Health, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization: Melbourne, **2007**.



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Department of Anthropology)

Sarah Chisholm Fletcher

2006

Brunel University

MSc

2002

McGill University

BA

"Navigating Multiple Worlds: Experiences of Stress from the Perspective of Immigrant Youth"

Thursday, December 4, 2014
2:00PM

Harry Hickman Building, room 116

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Lisa Mitchell, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Peter Stephenson, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Member)

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Outside Member)

Dr. Jennifer Mullett, Faculty of Human and Social Development, UVic (Additional Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Gillian Creese, Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Trevor Lantz, School of Environmental Studies, UVic

Abstract

Immigrant youth face uncertainty in many aspects of their lives. Most have little control over their family's decision to immigrate and once they arrive, many encounter challenges. The Navigating Multiple Worlds project, carried out in partnership with the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS), worked with a group of youth researchers to explore the relationship between stress, resilience and expressions of subjectivity among immigrant youth. Moving beyond the negative conceptualizations of stress and acculturative stress that dominate the literature, this research gathered youth perspectives on stress and what could be done to enhance supports for immigrant youth in Victoria.

Through our participatory approach, the youth research team was involved in the design and implementation of interviews, focus groups and finally a photovoice exercise. Our methodology worked to highlight narrative complexities and the fluidity of experiences, with the research team reflecting on their own experiences while gathering perspectives on stress from other immigrant youth. The research process itself was central to our findings. The benefits and challenges of working in participatory paradigms with youth and the value of arts based methods for capturing youth voices and creating 'thinking spaces' for community engagement are highlighted.

Historically, research has problematized immigrant youth identities. A focus on immigrant youth perspectives reveals that while many youth face challenges after immigration, they also emphasize the potential value of flexibility in self-definition, in the context of living and working in an increasingly interconnected world. The combination of our mixed-methods, participatory approach, our focus on youth voices, and taking an ethnographic approach to documenting experiences of stress, contributed to the distinctiveness of our findings. Considering stress as an idiom of narrative expression rather than an index of negative experience, acknowledges its place as part of the worldview of the participants, who use the term in multiple ways. The physicality of stress, the spatial and temporal dimensions of stress and 'everyday stressors' emerged from our analysis as thematic categories that describe the ways that youth experience 'stress'.

The findings of the Navigating Multiple Worlds project reflect not only on the challenges that can face immigrant youth, but also speak to the value of conceptualizing stress as a narrative idiom. Over the course of our research it became apparent that youth were talking about stress in ways that allowed them to discuss and normalize negative experiences, and also to re-frame experiences of 'stress' in positive terms. For many, this facilitated fluid movement from a focus on challenges to a focus on coping and resilience. Our research suggests that while conflicting expectations in the lives of immigrant youth are sources of 'stress' for many, they can also be understood as key 'sites of flexibility'. The processes of negotiation that occur in these 'sites of flexibility', as youth use the language of stress to name challenging experiences and overcome them, contributes to the resilience of youth.

Although our findings are specific to a small group of a particular kind of immigrant youth in Victoria, BC, considering stress as an idiom of resilience as

well as distress creates opportunities to recognize and enhance the strengths of immigrant youth and the supports available to them. Recommendations from our research in terms of service provision, supports, and participatory research with youth are provided, as well as suggestions for future research in anthropology related to immigrant youth and stress.

Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2013 Myers Horowitz Award, Centre for Youth and Society, University of Victoria for the dissemination of community based research

2010-2013 Fredrick Banting and Charles Best CIHR Doctoral Award

2012- Metropolis Conference Travel Award Feb 29-March 3, Toronto

2006- Full Scholarship- *International AIDS conference* Aug 11-16, Toronto

2005-2006 Masters Award, *CIHR, Institute of Infection and Immunity, Community Based Research & HIV Priority Award*

1998-2002 *Terry Fox Humanitarian Award*

Presentations

1. Fletcher, S. *Flexibility in Identity and Stress as an Idiom of Resilience: Immigrant youth Experiences*, Metropolis Conference, Milan, Italy- Nov. 5-7 2014 (Session Chair & Oral).
2. Fletcher, S. & Mullett, J. *Digital Stories and Engaging Youth to be Leaders 'Research Across the Lifespan'*- 5 Days in May, Island Health Authority, Victoria, 2014. (Oral).
3. Fletcher, S & Mullett, J. "2 Case studies- the challenges of participatory research with youth", Research Series, VIU, Nanaimo, 2014 (Oral).
4. Fletcher, S. "Participatory Research with Youth and the Social Dimensions of Health, Two Examples Using Arts based methods with Youth", Social Dimensions of Health Lecture Series, UVIC, 2013 (Oral).
5. Fletcher S. "Navigating Multiple Worlds, the Challenges and Benefits of Working in Participatory Paradigms with Youth" International Qualitative Health Research Conference, Halifax NS 2013 (Oral).
6. Fletcher, S. "Digital Stories and Engaging Youth to be Leaders" International Qualitative Health Research Conference, Halifax NS, 2013. (Co- written with Jennifer Mullett (Oral).