

**LONG-TERM PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF A YOUTH MEDIA PROGRAM: A
RETROSPECTIVELY CONSTRUCTED INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS**

by

Mijin Yang

B.A, The University of Alberta, 2008

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(School Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(VANCOUVER)

October 2014

© Mijin Yang, 2014

Abstract

This study explored long-term participants' experiences of involvement in YouthMADE, a BC-based youth media program with a social justice education component. Three emerging adults who had been involved in YouthMADE since adolescence participated in semi-structured interviews about their program experience. Results support existing research on benefits of youth engagement and participation in youth media programs, but also highlight complexities and challenges involved in the experience. Participant accounts describe the YouthMADE experience as transformative, in terms of self-exploration, learning, and in development of activism and a sense of community within the program. Findings highlight importance of supporting and empowering participants within such programs and necessity for further research on the lived experiences of youth media programs from alternate perspectives.

Preface

This thesis is an original, independent intellectual product of the author, Mijin Yang. The procedures for data collection and analysis involved in this study were covered and approved by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, Certificate number H13A 02383.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Chapter I: Introduction And Review Of Literature	1
<i>Youth Engagement</i>	1
<i>Youth Media Programs as Contexts for Engagement</i>	2
<i>Theoretical Underpinnings: Youth and Media</i>	3
<i>Mainstream Media Discourses and Impact</i>	4
<i>YouthMADE: Youth Media Program and Social Justice Education</i>	9
<i>The Production Phase: Filmmaking</i>	12
<i>The Outreach Phase: Workshop Facilitation</i>	13
<i>Impacts of Youth Media Programs</i>	15
<i>Gaps in Current Research</i>	17
<i>Significance of Long-term Participant Perspectives</i>	20
<i>The Current Study</i>	20
<i>Research Question</i>	23
Chapter II: Research Design And Methodology	24
<i>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</i>	24
<i>History of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</i>	25
<i>Rationale for Method</i>	26
<i>Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity</i>	27
<i>Participants</i>	30
<i>Procedures</i>	30
<i>Data Analysis</i>	32
<i>Validity and Rigour</i>	34
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	36
Chapter III: Results	38
<i>Overall Theme Structure</i>	40
<i>Theme 1: YouthMADE Experience as a Setting for Self-Exploration</i>	41
<i>Self-questioning: “It makes you question [the] grounds you’re standing on...”</i>	42
<i>Self-acceptance: “Learning to love myself, and to share that love”</i>	44
<i>Theme 2: YouthMADE Experience as an Opportunity for Learning</i>	50
<i>Acquiring anti-oppression knowledge and language: “Having that language allowed me to have those conversations”</i>	50
<i>Building media skills: “Having to work really hard for the confidence...and all that was a work in progress”</i>	52
<i>Contextualizing own experiences: “I had assumed that that’s just...[what] everyone knew”</i>	55
<i>Theme 3: YouthMADE Experience as a Platform for Action</i>	57
<i>Self-expression: “Being able to talk about [my experiences]”</i>	58
<i>Enabling others: “Inspiring the next generation of...young activists”</i>	60
<i>Theme 4: YouthMADE Experience as a Challenge</i>	62

<i>Stress: "The pain of being aware"</i>	63
<i>Vulnerability: "Being so challenged from the stance that we [are] on"</i>	65
Theme 5: YouthMADE as a Community	67
<i>Belonging: "The connections were so deep within ourselves, and with each other"</i>	67
<i>Support: "Sometimes you just need to be covered"</i>	70
<i>Separation from other spheres of life: "I felt like I was in a different place from them"</i>	72
Chapter IV: Discussion	75
<i>Summary of Results: Lived Long-term Experiences of Participation in YouthMADE and Their Meaning</i>	75
<i>Situating Findings In Current Literature</i>	78
<i>Personal transformation: Identity work</i>	78
<i>Media production and literacy: Program objectives</i>	82
<i>Calling attention to silenced perspectives: Films for social change</i>	84
<i>Story-telling as a method of empowerment and community-building</i>	85
<i>Long-term engagement: Impacts and sustaining factors</i>	86
<i>Challenges in engagement: Balancing the risks</i>	89
<i>Limitations and Strengths</i>	91
<i>Directions for Future Research</i>	94
<i>Implications for Practice</i>	95
Chapter V: Conclusion	99
References	102
Appendix A: Interview Schedule	111
Appendix B: Consent Form	112
Appendix C: Recruitment Email	114
Appendix D: Superordinate Themes and Sub-themes	115

List of Tables

Table 1. Categories and sub-themes by participation	41
Table 2. Retrospectively constructed experiences of a youth media program for long-term participants: Superordinate themes and sub-themes	115

Acknowledgments

My thesis experience is marked with infinite gratitude for the support and understanding I received throughout the process. Thank you first and foremost to my supervisor Dr. Jenna Shapka for her support, wisdom, kindness, and mentorship, without which this chronic deadline dodger could not have survived this experience. I would also like to acknowledge the members of DCTech lab, whose research and work ethic inspired and humbled me.

Many thanks to my committee members Dr. Sterett Mercer and Dr. Laurie Ford, for their guidance, patience, and understanding in the completion of this thesis as well as for their clinical supervision at the Assessment Clinic. Your feedback and consideration enriched my growth as a researcher and as a clinician. Thank you for making my tardiness your emergency.

Thank you to the participants of this study, whose stories moved and inspired me. It was an honor to be involved in sharing your experience with the world. Thank you to Ms. Deblehka Guin, whose tireless work with AMES has impacted so many lives, including mine.

I am also grateful to Christina Moniz, Sophie Ty, Mary Turri, Sara Greflund, and Marita Partanen, my colleagues, classmates, capsule crew and now lifelong friends.

Thank you to my parents, who steadied me through every high and low. 사랑하는
엄마 아빠 고맙습니다! <3

Finally, thanks to James Chevalier, my best friend and more, for everything.

Chapter I: Introduction And Review Of Literature

Youth Engagement

Meaningful youth engagement through a wide range of activities and contexts, (e.g., music, sports, or arts programs) is a long-standing area of practice and research (Rose-Krasnor, 2009). Youth engagement refers broadly to a young person's "sustained, meaningful involvement in an activity with a focus outside of him or herself" (Small & Memmo, 2004). Pancer, Rose-Krasnor and Loiselle define full, optimal youth engagement as involving "head, heart, and feet" - cognitive understanding of the activity and its significance, and affective involvement, such as enjoyment, as well as the behavior and time investment required participation (2002, p.2). Research has linked full youth engagement with beneficial outcomes, including increase in self-esteem and self-perceived sense of competence (Davidson, Manion, Davidson & Brandon, 2006), positive impact on vocational decision-making (Rose-Krasnor, 2009; Taylor & Pancer, 2007), and prevention of risky behavior (Holden et al., 2004).

Implications for positive outcomes of youth engagement have led to the development of practices for fostering and sustaining long-term, high-commitment engagement in adolescents and young adults through various community programs (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Small & Memmo, 2004). Longitudinal research suggests that youth engagement, particularly long-term participation in a context, may contribute significantly to identity development in adolescents and emerging adults (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger & Alisat, 2007). Pancer, Rose-krasnor and Loiselle's (2002) conceptual model of youth engagement posits that long-term engagement is contingent on a variety of individual-level

(e.g., positive experiences in the program) and systems-level (e.g., support from family, friends, and program staff in participation) factors that help sustain or inhibit participation. The emphasis on both personal and contextual factors of participation implies the necessity for exploring both individual experiences and program components of youth engagement contexts. The current study approaches both aspects of youth engagement through qualitative exploration of adolescents' long-term participation experiences in a youth media program.

Youth Media Programs as Contexts for Engagement

Youth media programs are an increasingly popular area of practice and research, and can be considered a context for exploring youth engagement (Farooqui & Terpstra, 2014). Although no standardized definition of a youth media program is yet available, some defining characteristics suggested include being youth-driven (Chavez & Soep, 2005; Goodman, 2003), as well as being supportive of the development and promotion of youth perspectives (Campbell, Hoey, & Perlman, 2001; Goodman, 2003). Campbell, Hoey and Perlman refer to youth media as media “conceived, developed, and produced by young people” (2001, p. 32). By association, youth media programs generally focus on generating youth media, or helping youth develop media literacy and skills, or both (Kinkade & Macy, 2003). Their purpose is often to foster the use of media as tools for youth development and learning, or as platforms for advocacy and facilitating societal change (Charmaraman, 2010; Chavez & Soep, 2005). Youth media produced through these programs generally present perspectives that counter the dominant cultural messages and images that tend to proliferate mass media (Charmaraman, 2010; Kinkade & Macy, 2003).

Media literacy skills and the creation of youth media hold exceptional importance in today's media-saturated society (Media Awareness Network, 2005; Schar, Gutierrez, Murphy-Hoefer & Nelson, 2006). Media production and critique skills are particularly important for adolescents, who generally spend more time consuming media than adults or children (Brown, Halpern & L'Engle, 2005; Rainie, 2010) and have more difficulty rejecting media messages in comparison to adults (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). As an example, a majority of students aged 12 to 18 report the belief that sexual images in television influence other youths (Strasburger, 2009). Ironically, less than a quarter of adolescents report being influenced by these images themselves (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002; Kunkel et al., 2005), highlighting both awareness and naivete regarding the impact of media on their social reality and behaviors.

Theoretical Underpinnings: Youth and Media

Strasburger's superpeer theory posits that media discourses influence adolescents through social mechanisms similar to those of peer groups (2009). As a 'super-peer', mass media contents act as references of normative or aspirational behavior, and provide scripts to enact in real-life situations. When examined in terms of Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001), media characters and images also provide symbolic modeling of behaviors and attitudes for adolescents (Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005; Kudanis, 2003). Arnett's (1995, as cited in Chapin, 2000) model of adolescent media use identifies entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification as primary objectives of youth media use. Unlike other social agents (e.g., family, school), media outlets are more likely to meet these objectives by providing engaging and favorable images and messages, resulting in adolescents' partiality for media (Chapin, 2000).

Adolescents also appropriate and adapt media narratives and images for sense-making in their lives, and by association, their identity construction (Arnett, 2000; Chapin, 2000; Kudanis, 2003). For example, Gerbner's cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) proposes that narrative storytelling accumulates to form and sustain adolescents' perceptions of social reality (Klein & Shiffman, 2009). This model posits that adolescents may possibly exclude cultural stories within their specific community contexts in favor of adopting the images and messages presented in media as the dominant source of cultural and social references.

Mainstream Media Discourses and Impact

Literature on media and adolescent development discussed above collectively suggest significant impacts of media discourses on adolescent identity construction. This significance in turn suggests necessity for examination of mainstream media discourses and their impact. Indeed, long-standing areas of inquiry by social activists in North America involve critiques of media images and messages, particularly of their role in reinforcing and perpetuating existing institutions and power dynamics (Fairclough, 2001; Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Thorpe, 2008). In particular, misrepresentation and underrepresentation of socially devalued groups such as racial and sexual minorities has been consistently identified and criticized in recent years (Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Stern, 2005). To wit, the majority of characters portrayed in North American television are white males under the age of 50 from upper-socioeconomic status backgrounds (Kudanis, 2003). Visible minorities constitute fewer than 5% of character presence on television, and are largely portrayed as stereotypes (Mastro & Stern, 2003; Van Evra, 2004). Presence and inclusion is scarce for all visible minority groups who do not fit the prescribed norms presented and

enforced by media, including Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans (Mastro & Stern, 2003). Adolescents are also considered marginalized in mainstream media, due to a scarcity of youth-focused narratives in mainstream television (e.g., news), with portrayals predominantly focusing on narratives of crime, sexualization, and deviance (Strange, 2007).

The accumulation of this continual lack of minority presence in media leads to symbolic annihilation, a process by which mass media minimizes, devalues and criticizes socially marginalized groups (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Although this concept has been applied since the 1970s to describe the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of women in media in feminist literature (McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz & Pescosolido & Tope, 2011), its effects have also been applied to racial (Rodriquez, 1999) and sexual (i.e., LGBTQQ, Fouts & Inch, 2005) minority groups. For example, individuals with homosexual orientations receive limited presence on television despite constituting a sizeable 10-13% segment of the population (Fouts & Inch, 2005), and are generally portrayed with sexual orientations as their defining trait, reducing other attributes of the character to emphasize their minority status (Klein & Shiffman, 2009). On a larger scale, portrayals of adolescents in general tend to be limited in range and stereotypical, which has been suggested to result in an overall de-valuing of adolescence and adolescent-specific concerns (Signiorelli, 2007). This tendency has been observed not only in television, but also in animation (Klein & Shiffman, 2009), films (Rodriquez, 1999), children's books (McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz & Pescosolido & Tope, 2011) and magazines (Thorpe, 2008) - all of which cater to adolescent demographics.

A lack of representation translates to an exclusion of minority groups' culturally specific stories, as well as lack of presence in the public conscious and the consequent absence of social power (Charmaraman, 2010; Newbold, 2002). As representation signals relative importance in society, this absence communicates a lack of "worth, capability, or inclusion that impact individual self-view, engagement, and survival" (Weinstein, 2006, p. 14). The absence of minority populations in media may also translate to a metaphorical model for hiding or minimizing one's minority characteristics, as their absence may signal that positive representations occur only in the absence of these traits (Fouts & Inch, 2005). Given adolescents' use of media as social references for acceptable behaviors, beliefs, and schemas, the underrepresentation of visibly marginalized populations and the treatment of homogenous populations as the norm may exclude and alienate adolescent viewers from various marginalized backgrounds.

Additionally, this lack of presence also translates to the absence of relatable models for adolescents who identify with underrepresented groups (Fouts & Inch, 2005). The symbolic annihilation of minority groups also impacts viewers from dominant groups, as this disparity in representation reinforces and encourages stereotypical beliefs about marginalized individuals, as well as promoting limited awareness of the real-life diversity within society (Signiorelli, 2007). This homogenous presentation also tacitly models intolerance of minority groups (Spencer, 2013), which may translate to real-life interactions. Adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of symbolic annihilation, due to their comparative inexperience with diverse social groups (Klein & Shiffman, 2009). Consequently, this symbolic annihilation impacts adolescents of all backgrounds through misinformation and facilitation of intolerance.

Some broad societal discourses that prevent recognition of oppression and the need for change are discourses of meritocracy and color-blindness (Applebaum, 2005). In taking a color-blind approach, one would consider racial group membership or background to be irrelevant to their lived experiences and interaction with others. By association, the discourse of color-blindness assumes that backgrounds and group belonging do not merit consideration or recognition, and denies systemic disadvantages conferred on minority groups (Applebaum, 2005; Ginwright & James, 2003). Similarly, the discourse of meritocracy posits that individuals or their group's characteristics are sole determinants of success, and backgrounds and group belongings should be ignored. This denial of privilege in favor of ignoring differences is a common recourse for individuals with privilege who are new to learning about systemic oppression, as the sense of benefitting from injustice induces guilt and challenges morality. The denial of privilege, or reluctance to own privilege, in turn, serves to further enforce the discourse of meritocracy, invisibility of oppression, and lack of motion toward social change. These discourses perpetuate and reflect the false belief that everyone's experiences are the same and equal regardless of their status or racial background, and that everyone deserves their treatment in society, with social background being irrelevant and should be ignored (Applebaum, 2005). These discourses transcend the context of media and are perpetuated through daily interactions and sometimes by societal institutions (e.g., school).

This inequality in representation and consequent social power lies at the crux of the necessity for alternative media. Independent media created by members of marginalized groups may provide a way for individuals to self-define their presence and identity, instead of being stereotyped or rendered invisible. Glynda Hull, a leading researcher in youth

media programs, thus recommends empowering adolescents to develop their voice, or ways in which they can “present and represent themselves to others and to themselves” as an educationally effective solution to countering the potentially negative effects of mainstream media discourses (Hull & Greeno, 2006, p.76).

In general, the relationship between media discourses and adolescent development highlights necessity for developing critical understanding of mainstream media discourses, and for production of alternative discourse for and by adolescents. Youth media programs provide opportunity for both. Youth media programs often aim to empower youth and foster activism, particularly for those whose presence and perspectives are marginalized in current mainstream media (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). Within this context, youth media production is largely considered a potential tool for enabling adolescents to “reiterate and shape the world they live in, both as social producers and as products” (Charmaraman, 2010, p. 206). The current study aimed to explore the experiences of marginalized adolescents in a youth media program that provided opportunity to critique and analyse media messages, and ultimately produce their own media to provide a voice for their personal, often untold experiences. By inviting their subjective, retrospective accounts of participation in the program, I aimed also to provide an opportunity for these participants to discuss the meaning of their experience and its impact on their development over the past five years.

Although youth media programs have only recently garnered attention in research, the practice of community-based media groups have been documented as early as 1960s in North America (Goodman, 2003). Media produced through such programs contributed to the context of student counterculture and the civil rights movement at the time (Goodman,

2003). Despite economic factors resulting in the temporary decline of media programs in 1970s, the recent development of inexpensive, accessible mobile media technologies have refueled interest in youth-led media projects (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). Most notably, increased accessibility to the internet and media production devices have recently escalated youth media creation, dissemination and consumption (Chau, 2010). This increased youth media production is considered to be propelled by adolescents' autonomous desire for expression, advocacy, engagement, and social impact (Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010). The rise in media production among today's adolescents can be considered continuation of the earlier media programs in terms of its youth-driven nature, promotion of marginalized perspectives, and empowerment of underrepresented segments of society. YouthMADE, the program of interest in this study, is also a modern configuration of a youth media program that follow in the tradition of being youth-led, and focused on marginalized experiences, and the empowerment of individual perspectives.

YouthMADE: Youth Media Program and Social Justice Education

YouthMADE is a youth film production, media literacy, and outreach program targeted at multi-barriered youth who self-identify as marginalized in society. The program was developed and funded by the Access to Media Education Society (AMES), a non-profit organization that coordinates and creates media products, programs, and relevant opportunities for youth in British Columbia (BC). YouthMADE started in 2009, as a continuation of a similar mid-1990s program also created by AMES, where adolescents were invited to discuss media images and produce independent short films over the course of a weekend-long film-making intensive (Production phase). The films were then developed into a curriculum and used as the foundation for youth-led school-based

workshops on anti-oppression (Outreach phase). As a youth media program with a focus on social justice education, the primary program objective of the Production phase was to enable participants to produce and disseminate independent media as a means of creating social change. The primary program objective of the Outreach phase was to enable participants in facilitating discussions of anti-oppression around YouthMADE films as a means of social change. The program components focused on helping participants build skills in media production, providing social justice education for developing media literacy, and providing them skills and opportunities for facilitating discussion around their media creations. The purpose, programming and products of YouthMADE are largely consistent with youth media programs and youth media as defined in current literature (e.g., Campbell, Hoey and Perlman's 2001 above-cited definition of youth media).

Although self-labeled primarily as a youth media program, YouthMADE also involves elements of social justice education, particularly in its emphasis on anti-oppression and by encouraging students to take active roles in bringing social change to their communities. YouthMADE program objectives are consistent with Bell's (1997) definition of social justice as a democratic, inclusive, and collaborative process of creating change toward equitable distribution of resources and equal participation of all groups. Aspects of the YouthMADE program encompass formal teaching components and specific content and values corresponding to essential components of social justice education as outlined by Hackman (2005): content mastery, tools for critical analysis, tools for social change, tools for personal reflection, and awareness of multicultural group dynamics. Elements of the program corresponding to these essential components will be discussed in the overview of the program components below.

Broadly defined, social justice education refers to fostering perspectives toward recognition of, and opposition to oppression and inequality (Bialystok, 2014), and can be conceptual, or practical in its delivery. Theoretical content and anti-oppression training provided through YouthMADE was based on Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theory of oppression. Based in academic literature from fields of legal studies, sociology, history, and women's studies (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2006), CRT has since been extended to provide a framework for many social justice and social responsibility education curricula in North America (Kumashiro, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). CRT recognizes race and its intersectionality with other forms of oppression as a central, permanent, and institutional feature entrenched in society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Within this model, power relationships in society are based on privileging dominant groups and marginalizing minorities (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The CRT model as it applies to social justice education aims to counter hegemonic discourses and paradigms by highlighting how race intersects with other social constructs such as gender and socioeconomic class to impact lived experiences (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Major ideas of CRT that framed discussions and teaching sessions in both phases of YouthMADE involved questioning the meaning of meritocracy in light of systemic inequalities, intersectionality and multidimensionality of oppression across contexts, and the importance of creating counternarratives to preserve and promote marginalized perspectives (Delgado et al., 2001). This emphasis on counter narratives, critique, and commitment to eliminating oppression converged with the goals of creating youth media and promoting youths' perspectives to create YouthMADE, a youth media program with a social justice focus. CRT-based education was intended to provide participants with a basis

for recognition of oppression in media, but also equipped them to recognize oppression and inequality in their lives and communities outside of media.

The Production Phase: Filmmaking

Recruitment for the Production phase of YouthMADE occurred through presentations and poster promotions in schools and community organizations in Lower BC. High school students aged 14 to 19 were encouraged to submit application essays regarding their motivation for pursuing the program. Nineteen adolescents were selected based on the merits of these essays. As noted above, the Production phase was a week-long film-making intensive during which participants were provided with opportunity to produce independent films about their experiences of social injustices and marginalization. Identification with experiences of marginalization was a criterion for participation in YouthMADE, as a significant proportion of the program experience focused on inviting participants to explore, identify, and discuss marginalization of various groups in media and society. The criteria for marginalization encompassed any forms of self-identified marginalization, including but not limited to overt, implicit, physical, social, or emotional, racial, sexual, immigrant, or health-related marginalization.

Selected applicants were invited to the Galiano Island Film and Television School (GIFTS), where they participated in workshops, discussions, and reflection exercises on media literacy and critical race theory led by AMES staff mentors. The overarching purpose of this phase was to encourage adolescents to become independent, active, and creative agents in reducing injustice and discrimination in their personal lives and communities. By supporting adolescents in sharing their perspective through media, YouthMADE was

intended to foster participants' creativity, activism, media literacy, and sense of social responsibility.

All participants were encouraged to continually share and reflect on their experiences throughout the filmmaking process, with the discussions feeding into each team's film concept selection. With technical support and mentorship, participants, in groups of 2 to 4, translated their chosen concepts into scripts. Participants performed camera work, soundwork, and editing with technical mentorship, which resulted in a hands-on technical process. In total, six short films were developed, titled "Canvas", "The Perfect Immigrant", "I Am Here", "Keep it Real", "Tune In", and "Metamorphosis". The films focused on discrimination, immigration, colonialism, body image and cultural racism, diversity, and sexual identity, respectively.

The Outreach Phase: Workshop Facilitation

Subsequent to the Production phase, AMES developed the YouthMADE short films into a social justice education curriculum for school-based short-term workshops. This phase involved delivery of 60-90 minute workshops to schools and teacher groups. The content of the workshops are based on the topics identified by the films, and involves group viewing and discussion of one of the YouthMADE films. Two YouthMADE peer facilitators lead each workshop. The Outreach phase started in 2010 and is currently ongoing. YouthMADE workshops have reached over 3000 participants in British Columbia, and have been conducted with students ranging in age from early elementary-aged to adult students and teachers. As much as possible, the film for each workshop is selected to reflect the particular audience's concerns and objectives (e.g., a video about racism for a class experiencing cultural and racial tension between students). Facilitators lead the group

through teaching and discussion on different forms of prejudice, discrimination, and institutionalized inequality, as well as various exercises in discussion of acceptance and equality. The goal of the workshops is to spark discussion and critique of the central topic, to teach participants about institutionalized oppression, and to connect participants' personal experiences to systems-level perspectives. Similar to discussions facilitated among participants of the Production phase, the discussions also involve collective reflections on personal experiences of marginalization felt among participants and facilitators alike. As in the previous phase, the objectives, discussions, workshops, and reflections involved in this phase also reflect elements of social justice education (Hackman, 2005).

All facilitators in the Outreach phase are paid employees of AMES. The facilitators self-identified as youth, ranged in age from ages 16 to 25, and had applied for positions based on their interest in social justice, or previous involvement with the program (e.g., as a Production phase participant). Five of the original YouthMADE film creators from the Production Phase are also currently involved in the Outreach phase as facilitators. These long-term participants who had continued their involvement with YouthMADE by becoming workshop facilitators are the focus of the current study, as they had participated in both phases of the program and sustained their program involvement for more than five years. The two phases of the program are distinct, and although it is not necessary to have been involved in the earlier phase to be involved in the latter phase, inviting these participants enabled me to capture experiences and personal meanings attributed to both phases of the program, as well as any notable similarities, accumulation of effects, or contrasts in their experience between the two phases. Focusing on the experience of these

participants also allowed me to explore the motivation and sustaining factors that helped continue their involvement. Methodology for this study (described in Chapter 2) was also selected with this relative homogeneity of sample and their shared experience in mind.

Impacts of Youth Media Programs

Although evaluation and research on youth media programs are yet scarce, existing research on similar programs largely suggest the possibility of positive outcomes (Campbell, Hoey & Perlman, 2001). Adolescent participation in community-based media literacy programs has been associated with increases in self-reported academic aspirations (McLaughlin, 2000), as well as self-rated levels of community engagement (Menten, 2009). Evaluations of media literacy programs focusing on specific areas of risky behavior have also suggested significant success in favorably changing adolescents' perceptions of body dissatisfaction (Wade, Davidson, & O'Dea, 2003) and tobacco use (Gonzales, Glik, Davoudi & Ang, 2004). A case study involving direct input from adolescent participants in a youth media production program has also indicated experiences of empowerment from participation, as well as a sense of compensation for alienation in media, and a greater sense of connection to their communities (Hobbs & Yoon, 2008). Despite the scarcity of formal evaluations of program outcomes, existing studies on youth media program outcomes collectively suggest potential benefits of participation, which may also be associated with positive impacts in the community or school.

However, emerging works also point to potential vulnerability and risk required by participants in publically sharing their personal experiences and messages for social change (Srivastava & Francis, 2006). Participant accounts of youth media program experiences may be particularly valuable in light of recent research indicating depths and

complexity of story-sharing experiences for adolescent activists. More specifically, recent research suggests that the critical approach often assumed by youth media programs place participants of marginalized groups in the vulnerable position of presenting and defending their cultural experiences of discrimination, while participants from privileged backgrounds often assume the role of judging, questioning, and scrutinizing these stories (albeit often with intent to learn from these experiences: Srivastava & Francis, 2006). One recent case study on an Australian community media program, YouthWorx, revealed that although storytelling through media holds potential pleasure and opportunity for empowerment, participants also assumed the risk and responsibility for the reactions facilitated by their narratives. To this end, program creators emphasize the necessity of balancing participants' self-expression with competencies in interpersonal skills as well as editorial judgment (Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010). Furthermore, research suggests negative peer attitudes and stereotypes toward emerging adults who engage in social activism, regardless of domain of activism (e.g., feminism, environmentalism, Bashir et al, 2013). Being faced with stereotypes of being militant and eccentric may lead to difficulties in peer interaction and increased social stress, as well as possible vulnerabilities to bullying or exclusion among non-activist peers. These rarely discussed risks of sharing personal experiences of marginalization suggest that the experience of participation may be laced with insecurities, vulnerabilities, frustration, or regret as well as the positive effects typically associated with youth media involvement. As such, qualitative exploration of these experiences is important as it may provide a safe context for participants to bring forth any negative experiences from participation and retrospectively enhance our understanding of their program experiences.

In general, much remains to be explored regarding adolescents' lived experiences of participation, or their perceived meaning of the program in the course of their lives. In this phenomenological study with YouthMADE participants, I intended to add nuance and details of long-term participants' program experiences and their significance to the existing body of works on youth media programs and youth engagement.

Gaps in Current Research

Current research and evaluation on youth media programs have suggested some positive impacts from participation and possible factors sustaining participation. However, existing studies have predominantly taken quantitative approaches focusing on program outcomes, with very few formal qualitative studies that focus on the processes of participation experience (Campbell, Hoey & Perlman, 2001; Charmaraman, 2010). This imbalance suggests a necessity for exploration of the processes and mechanisms by which these impacts are achieved. Existing studies also more often focus on the program as a whole, rather than on its constituent components or phases. A closer, qualitative exploration of the participation experience is necessary to examine how aspects of the program experiences were received, and whether the experience was commensurate with the intended program experience and effects. While outcome measures such as program satisfaction ratings and self-ratings of learning have mostly been used as indicators of the program experience and impacts (Campbell, Hoey, & Perlman, 2001; Srivasta & Francis, 2006), our current understanding of participants' program experiences would be greatly enriched with specificity and connections between experience and impact that structured qualitative data could provide. More specifically, qualitative information will bridge the potential gap between estimated effects of program experiences as demonstrated by

indicator variables, and participants' lived experiences and their personal significance (Charmaraman, 2010; Rose-Krasnor, 2009). A qualitative, participant-centred approach has the potential to render a more detailed picture of subjective participant experiences and impacts.

To understand more clearly how youth media program experiences impact developmental well-being, inviting participants to become active contributors of their lived experience may be preferable to involving them as questionnaire respondents or subjects of observation. More active inclusion of participant perspectives in youth media programs research also reflects the youth media programs' objectives of empowering adolescent participation and nurturing marginalized perspectives. That is, in terms of ethical consistency with philosophies of program practice, studies that provide opportunities for adolescents' active input may be necessary and contextually informative (Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010) as well as respectful to the intent and history of youth media programs as a means of youth empowerment.

Participants' opportunity for reflection and presentation of personal experiences is a further benefit of the approach taken in this study. Verbal story-telling of significant life experiences has been shown to contribute to psychological well-being of participants in similar studies (Tavernier & Willoughby, 2012). Opportunities for participants to describe their experiences and the meaning attributed to that experience have also been suggested to enrich individuals' understandings of themselves (Bradley, 2005). Moreover, some aspects of program experience and impacts lend itself optimally to exploration through qualitative, participant-centred accounts involved in this study. For example, exploring

YouthMADE experiences as it pertains to self-perception and identity development necessitates a qualitative, participant-centred approach.

Given the opportunities for reflection on personal experiences and the self throughout both phases of the YouthMADE experience, identity exploration and self-questioning was considered to likely be a part of the program experience. Major processes of adolescent identity formation as defined by Erikson (1968), such as exploration of own values, priorities, and choices, and commitment to one's own consolidate set of values and styles, may constitute part of participants' experiences in YouthMADE. Building on Erikson's model, James Marcia's theory of identity achievement focuses on the extent to which adolescents explore and commit to an identity across various contexts, and identifies crisis, or reevaluation of own existing values, and commitment to values as two central components of adolescent identity. Marcia defined crisis as a period of upheaval and self-examination, during which existing values, priorities, choices, and interactional styles are questioned and examined, which ends with commitment to a certain set of values (1966). Participant reports of introspection and self-perceived changes in identity may be explored in reference to these paradigms of identity development and this idea of a 'crisis' period to conceptualize the overall program experience.

Participant accounts of program experiences may also address development of identity in different dimensions, such as their social identity, personal identity, cultural identity or sexual identity. Social identity refers to roles (e.g., social activist), or categories of belonging (e.g., Asian-Canadian) that individuals claim as representative, whereas personal identity refers to self-descriptive characteristics and behaviors linked to identity categories (Deaux, 1993). Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1983) racial and cultural identity

development model outlines processes of conformity to dominant culture, dissonance between dominant and own culture, resistance and withdrawal from dominant culture, introspection and integration of both cultures, and synergistic articulation through balancing all cultural factors as components of progression toward defining minority racial identity. Exploration of other facets of identity, including queer identity, sexual identity, social identity, are all possible features of the program experience throughout the course of participation.

Significance of Long-term Participant Perspectives

Studies on long-term participants of youth media programs are also scarce in current literature. Exploring experiences of highly committed, long-term participants in the program may be informative of various factors influencing or sustaining their participation over the years. In this study, I sought to explore the values, benefits, and challenges of YouthMADE participation as retrospectively perceived by participants, adding shades of complexity, struggle, and vulnerability to our current understanding. The long-term perspectives on the meaning and value of the program experience may provide a richer, fuller perception of its contribution to participant lives over time. Participant accounts may also highlight components of the program experience that facilitate long-term engagement and commitment.

The Current Study

This study sought to contribute a qualitative, retrospective perspective by inviting participants, five years after initial program participation, to give their retrospective insight regarding their participation experience, as well as its meaning and the integration

of that experience into their lives since initial participation. This delay allowed for richer descriptions of program experiences, as participants were able provide both their initial and long-term constructions and impacts of participation. Having started the program as adolescents, participants of the current study were in emerging adulthood (21-23) at time of participation in this study. They were asked to describe their experiences and its meaning in their lives in relation to their current selves. Grysman and Hudson's 2010 study on adolescents and emerging adults' construction of life events demonstrate that although adolescents are developmentally able to construct coherent life-stories through event connection and abstract thinking, emerging adults' constructions of significance experiences show more complexity and self-related abstract connections. For the purposes of this study, participants were asked to draw on their long-term perspective to describe the significance and contribution of YouthMADE to their current selves.

My initial steps in this study were guided by impressions of the program experience being a transformative experience for the participants. This understanding stemmed from what I have seen and heard about the program, as well as the anecdotal evidence from my personal interactions with past and current participants. Observations of several past participants' workshops, activist work, and visibility in media as social activists in the local community on several issues (e.g., LGBTQQ) has also fed this prediction, and I was motivated to explore the contribution of the YouthMADE experience in their development as highly engaged activists. My initial anticipation of results expected discussions of skills, perspectives, connections, and support that were received by the participants from the program experience.

The current study did not seek to draw a theory regarding general phenomena of experiences from youth media programs, or social justice programs. Rather, I sought to describe and explain participants' long-term experiences in YouthMADE and the process by which their experience impacted their lives and developmental well-being.

Phenomenological exploration of participant accounts may be informative for describing program experiences as perceived by participants, and its benefit, value, or significance in their development in the past five years. The program experiences may have contributed significantly to participants' development, or have been auxiliary to other life events that enabled them to reach their current selves. The detailed participant accounts gathered in this study also address each participant's perceived important phases and steps of the experience that led to the program experience impacts, and their perceived impact of the program on themselves. The process and objectives of this study may be framed as my pursuit to co-construct and highlight the "how" of participants' YouthMADE experiences that connect their past selves and current selves. Literature on evaluation of treatments or programs suggest that such exploration and clarifications of stages in a causal or impacting process can contribute significantly to connecting impacts to the treatment or experience (Chen & Rossi, 1983; Lipsey, 1993) Although not intended for generalization as universal experiences, results may provide further direction for future practice in similar programs. Findings may also bring forth non-program factors among the complex processes that interacted with their program experience to produce self-perceived impacts. In such case, the results may contribute to enhancing our overall understanding of development and how youth media programs may interact with other experiences or events in adolescent development. Richer, contextual understanding of these experiences and processes may

also help widen the range of impacts to explore in connection with YouthMADE or other similar programs. For the practices of YouthMADE itself, findings may be informative for exploring how the felt program experience and impacts converge or diverge from the goals of the program, and its intended impacts.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore long-term participants' lived experiences of YouthMADE, and their retrospective construction of the participation experiences as emerging adults. Therefore, the research questions considered in this study are:

1. What are marginalized adolescents' lived long-term experiences of participation in YouthMADE, constructed retrospectively as emerging adults?
2. How was the YouthMADE experience meaningful to the participants?

Chapter II: Research Design And Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The current study takes an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, which is framed in a social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism assumes a subjective and contextually based reality that can only be accessed indirectly and through the individually or communally situated perspectives as participants in a phenomena, or as an observer or listener (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Participants' YouthMADE experiences are thus assumed to be specific to each participant's personal, social, cultural, and historical contexts. Each participant's experience and meaning of the experience is also considered a personal interpretation constructed by their interaction with their context (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the study also assumes an interpretive and contextualist stance for its epistemological orientation, which complements the ontology by allowing access to experiences through interpretations.

Similar to several other qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), IPA emphasizes the significant role of language in sense-making and construction of experiences. Unlike discourse analysis, IPA also conceptualizes language as being able to reflect cognitions. This approach, therefore, seeks understanding of the participants' opinions and beliefs regarding their experiences, rather than the interactive tasks achieved by language (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Additionally, IPA is distinct for its twofold focus on the idiographic, or individual characteristics of participants, as well as the pattern of meaning across each participant's accounts. Ultimately, the purpose of IPA is to understand the lived experience rather than to define or generalize the phenomenon.

History of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) surfaced as a qualitative research approach in the 1990s from the field of psychology (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA stems from established traditions of Gestalt psychology and phenomenology philosophies that date back to works of Goethe and Husserl in the 19th century. Phenomenology encompasses a variety of philosophical perspectives and accompanying strategies, but is generally bound by its focus on lived experiences of various phenomena. Specifically, IPA seeks to examine individuals' lived experiences in the context of their life-world, and in terms of their own perspectives and perceptions. (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The approach is aligned with Heidegger's philosophy of phenomenology in that all descriptions of events are essentially interpretations through individuals' unique frames of reference (Moran, 2000; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Within IPA, each person is conceptualized as a dynamic, sense-making individual embodying unique perspectives and intentionality toward experiences. IPA's focus on Dasein, or 'being-in-the-world', distinguishes this approach from other branches of phenomenology; individuals' subjective experiences constructed through their personal lives of cultural and social meanings, or "factual" experiences (Moran, 2000), and by association, idiographic information of individuals is the focus of this study, as opposed to commonalities in accounts of experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2003). This ideographic focus causes comparisons drawn between accounts of experiences in IPA to be "fine-grained" relative to other forms of phenomenology, seeking personal information about individuals, and convergence and divergence of their experiences of one phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). While the approach is still consistent with other phenomenology approaches in its search

for unifying connections between experiences, IPA positions the idiographic as the route to approaching global structures (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA is also related to concepts of hermeneutics, and symbolic interactionism, particularly in its iterative nature where the product of analysis feeds into ongoing analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010).

Within this paradigm, processes of interpretation are considered dynamic and collaborative, involving the researcher as well as the participant (Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009; Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010). In an IPA framework, bracketing researcher conceptions and biases are considered impossible. As such, the researcher draws on his or her own conceptualizations and experiences to access the participants' world of being. Interpretation and construction of the participant experiences in this study is therefore bound not only by participant accounts, but also by my ability to analyze and interpret the accounts (Piekiewicz & Smith, 2012). Using IPA, I attempted to walk in the shoes of three long-term YouthMADE participants and understand their experience of participation, while recognizing that my understanding will remain an approximation of their unique experiences. The results of this study provided a description of the lived program experience that has been refracted through my interpretative lens.

Rationale for Method

Qualitative inquiries into adolescents' experiences of media programs are scarce in the existing literature in the area (Srivastava & Francis, 2006). IPA was chosen for its focus on exploration of participants' lived experiences and their attributed meanings. This method aimed to approach the participants' personal perceptions and interpretations while acknowledging that a direct or full experience of their perspective was not possible

(Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010; Smith & Osborn, 2007). This approach afforded an in-depth picture of individuals' subjective and personal experiences with YouthMADE. Additionally, this method allowed participants opportunities to tell their story and contextualize their program experience within their larger life experiences leading up to development of their current selves. Detailed exploration of participant experiences through IPA may help bridge the gap between existing literature and practice, and between suggested program outcomes and program experiences. The richer understanding gained from this study may provide a foundation for theories and practices pertaining to youth media and youth media programs, as well as empowerment of marginalized adolescents.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

IPA requires researchers to acknowledge biases and examine presuppositions as much as possible when entering the inquiry process (Cross, Coleman, & Stewart, 2003). Although I worked to maintain an openness and receptivity to the participants' experiences of the program, my reception of their accounts were perceived and colored through my own lens of knowledge, biases, and existing understanding of YouthMADE and its participants. My interpretation of participant experiences was constructed by drawing from my own experiences and conceptions in IPA, thereby coloring the inquiry with my own perspectives and biases (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). My research interest in marginalized adolescents and media programs emerge from my background as an Asian-Canadian first-generation immigrant and my lived experiences of marginalization, including the marginalization I detected through images and messages in the media. My memories of examining mass media, including teen magazines, television shows, and young adult novels for indications of characters who shared a similar background as myself has

played a significant role in my motivation for pursuing this study and youth media programs as a whole. This inquiry was therefore partly an attempt for myself to examine how other adolescents have used similar experiences as motivation to take a more active role in media production. I kept myself mindful over the course of my exploration by reflecting on my own process of developing media critiquing skills, and of coming to recognize my marginalization in the media as a reflection of greater, uncomfortable, and invisible power dynamics. By being aware of my own history and processes, I was able to acknowledge them as a point of reference but also able to explore others' experiences outside of my own.

My interest in this study also emerged from my previous involvement with research on YouthMADE. I was involved as a data collection assistant for teachers' and students' experiences of participation in YouthMADE workshops. Following this data collection, I also collaborated with other researchers on a critical discourse analysis of YouthMADE films and interview data from the time of the program. Through my involvement in these studies, I have viewed all YouthMADE films and participated in several YouthMADE workshops with teachers, students, and education professionals, some of which were led by participants of this study. From my interactions with participants outside of research contexts, I received the impression of their strong connection to the program as well as a sense of community among participants and the staff of YouthMADE. My training in school psychology and my interest in adolescent development gave rise to questions regarding the details of their experience in the program, and how their participation has impacted them in their lives, and their academic and career goals. Based on the positive impressions of the program experience that were presented to me anecdotally or through the films and

interviews I viewed, I saw YouthMADE as having played a significant, positive, and transformative experience in the participants' lives. My involvement with analysis of YouthMADE films and existing interviews also provided me with the impression of personal investment that most participants seemed to have poured into their YouthMADE experience. However, my review of research in the topic of youth media and social justice education also provided me with expectations of some negative aspects to their experience, such as a sense of alienation from others or a sense of burden from participation as well.

As complete bracketing of one's assumptions are considered a false ideal (Ehrich, 2003), continual efforts to acknowledge my position were enforced. Koch posits that credibility of qualitative studies, including those in phenomenological traditions, are enhanced when researchers build self-awareness by continually reflecting on and describing their experience and positionality (2006). To this end, I kept a journal throughout this inquiry, a common method of recording processes of construction for self-reflection and sharing with participants and auditors, leading to systematic self-awareness. My journal accounts included information in four categories: access (i.e., how participants seem to receive or perceive myself as a researcher, a more advanced adult, an Asian-Canadian, a woman), initial reactions (i.e., my initial reactions and any prejudices that emerged to each participant, and the process of recruitment and setting up interviews), experiences (my experience of direct, face-to-face interaction with each participant, both content and process of our interactions), and issues (any ethical, research, or personal and social difficulties or conflicts I faced throughout the process), and participant as co-researcher (details regarding their construction experiences, their openness to construction).

Participants

Emerging adults who had participated in YouthMADE as adolescents in 2009 and continued to be involved to the present as workshop facilitators with the YouthMADE curriculum were invited to participate in this study. Potential participants were contacted through the YouthMADE administrative team, who relayed the study recruitment information to the facilitators and invited potential participants to contact the researcher if interested. The participants included one woman, one man, and an individual who identifies as two-spirited, all of whom were currently aged between 21 and 23 years old. All three are and have been involved in YouthMADE as workshop facilitators since the Production Phase in 2009. This sample size meets Brocki and Wearden's (2006) recommended guidelines for IPA studies, where a small number of homogenous cases are favored to allow for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2013). By restricting the sample to long-term participants, I was able to discuss program experiences through both phases of the program and the process of participation over time and its impact on their lives. Consistent with the ideographic focus of IPA, each participant will be introduced with a brief description in the Results chapter below.

Procedures

Although data for IPA analysis may come in several forms, including diary entries and focus groups (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006), the use of semi-structured interviews have been reported as the most common and effective medium for data collection, as they afford engagement and co-construction of experiences with the researcher and participants (Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010; Smith & Osborn, 2007). As such, this study employed semi-structured interviews with each participant. The interview

incorporated aspects of each participant's application essays as retrospective probes to situate them such that they were best able to describe themselves at the time of application. Such elicitation techniques using photos and significant artifacts have been employed in various disciplines with a wide range of participants, including psychology and education, and have been suggested to be helpful for collecting in-depth data (Sandhu, Ives, Birchwood & Uptegrove, 2013). Each participant was invited to a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Interview times and locations were arranged in consultation with each participant. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was provided with a copy of their initial application essay with which they had applied for YouthMADE participation in 2009. They were asked to examine their essay and then asked to describe themselves at the time of application, followed by their experience in the program and its meaning in context of their current selves. Consistent with the IPA approach, questions were generally open and the interview schedule was flexible and open to divergence if the participant or researcher saw importance or interest in an emerging topic relevant to their experience (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Interviews ranged from 50 to 85 minutes for each participant. The interview schedule is included in Appendix A.

At the beginning of each interview, I obtained informed consent from each participant and invited any questions about the study or the interview process. All participants were provided with an information letter detailing the purpose and nature of the study and informed of their participant rights to withhold or withdraw information as they see necessary. Written consent regarding their participation and a video recording of their responses was obtained from all participants prior to the interview. Following completion of each interview, all participants were offered copies of the interview video for

their own viewing and use. The video artifacts were intended as a tangible contribution from this proposed research study toward YouthMADE and the participating individuals, to be used for their personal reflection and records, as well as any additional film projects that the participants may wish to develop (e.g., collaborative retrospective documentary). At the end of the interview, participants were invited to share any questions or final comments regarding their program experience and study participation experience.

Notes were taken following each interview to record impressions, feelings, and significant elements of interaction reflexively. Prior to analysis, I transcribed all interviews methodically through repeated listening, as a part of the researcher data familiarization process (Lapadat, 1999). In keeping with the focus and orientation of the study on the content of participants' accounts, transcripts recorded participant responses verbatim, denoting non-verbal elements such as body language, changes in voice tone and pitch, and other non-verbal cues that may present in the interview. Following analysis of each interview, each participant was emailed a list of themes from their interview and representative quotes, and asked whether the themes were resonant with their participation experience in YouthMADE. Participants were invited at this point to share any questions or clarify any aspect of their participant accounts of the experience.

Data Analysis

Consistent with the close contact with participant accounts necessary for the idiographic approach involved in IPA (Smith, 2004), each interview was explored, examined, and analyzed individually prior to its consideration with other interviews. Each interview was transcribed prior to analysis, using a methodical process of repeated listening to the interview recordings to immerse myself in the data and facilitate precision

(Lapadat, 1999). Interview data was transcribed to reflect the recording as accurately as possible, with observations included to note noticeable changes in facial expression or overall affect. In the transcription process, I created a transcription key delineating elements of interview data captured in transcripts: facial expressions, dramatic changes in voice tone or volume, and body language. The transcription process also served as a stage of analysis, which Smith and Osborn (2008) termed 'immersion in data'. Following transcription, I also repeatedly read the interview transcripts to continue my process of immersion in data.

After establishing familiarity with each account, I then underwent the process of 'initial commenting', where initial analytical impressions about the data on each immediate item were recorded line-by-line. I then summarized each account, and revisited each account with a more analytical lens, examining the data at the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual levels. Descriptive comments focused on the content of the participant's statements, whereas linguistic comments examined their use of language (e.g., how they situated themselves and others through pronouns), and conceptual comments addressed the greater, overarching assumptions and ideas underlying his or her statements. Emergent themes produced at this stage from comments for each interview were listed in chronological order and then examined for relationships and connections between themes, which were then classified into theme categories. This process was repeated with each individual interview. Following organizations of themes and categories for each individual interview, I clustered the themes into collective, overarching superordinate themes and categories from all participants. This process involved my interpretation in prioritization of which themes to highlight, and which to condense, as well as in determining how themes fit

together. A table of superordinate themes and sub-themes is included in Appendix D. Following the superordinate themes, I revisited the interview transcripts to examine the reflection of individual accounts into the collective superordinate themes.

As the researcher is considered an active participant in IPA, the analysis was enacted as a dynamic process continually modified by emerging ideas and impressions, reflecting the data collection method; access to participant stories were integrated with researchers' conceptions, which are combined to make meaning of the participant's account through interpretation (Smith, 1996). This combination of participants' stories and researchers' interpretation was intended to result in a weighing of the unique, individualistic qualities of each participant interview with the shared essences across the group (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Following analysis completion, participants were invited to check interview transcripts as well as themes and categories for consistency with their experience, as discussed below.

Validity and Rigour

Participant resonance, or meaningful affect on the reader or viewer, was one measure by which validity of this study was determined. Resonance is considered to be attained when the participant confirmed that accounts as conveyed in the study reflected their own lived experience. To ensure transparency and provide evidence of resonance, each participant was invited to review the interview transcripts to confirm its consistency with their intended meaning (Shenton, 2004). Participants were also invited to view the categories and themes from the study to check for resonance, or the identification of a reported experience as consistent with one's personal experiences (Yardley, 2007). When asked if the presented themes and quotes corresponded with their lived experience in

YouthMADE, two of the three participants confirmed resonance with their own experiences. One person commented that although supportive interactions with program administrators was not an aspect emphasized during the interview, that their support was an important aspect of the program experience and contributed to the sense of community within YouthMADE. This participant's added emphasis on the program administrator's support converged with other participants' identification of this support as a significant part of their program experience. The participant's comment was included in the discussion of the theme of YouthMADE as a Community, under the subtheme of Support.

Pragmatic usefulness in the field of relevant practice and research was also a criteria for determining worth of the study. An expert reviewer from the UBC Institute for Social Justice who had been involved in coordinating YouthMADE facilitators was invited to review results of the study and check for their pragmatic value in practice as well as furthering research in the area of youth, media, and development. The reviewer commented that the themes were generally consistent with the experiences of many YouthMADE participants who had been involved in the program at some point, both those who had been long-term participants and those who had participated briefly. He also added that although not categorized as a theme, the experience of empowerment is an underlying component for the overall YouthMADE experience, films, and workshops, and incorporated into its aspects on every level, including social interactions and collaborative practices within the organization. He stated that the sense of community in YouthMADE identified in the participant accounts are also long-lasting, resulting in a community of alumni from the program who also maintain connections with the program years following their time of participation. He confirmed the value of the study as a means of highlighting significance of

the feelings and processes involved in participation experiences in YouthMADE, and aspects of social education experiences as well.

Ethical Considerations

As discussed above, participants were recruited through the administration team at YouthMADE. Although I was acquainted with some of the YouthMADE facilitators who met criteria for participation in this study, I was not aware of the identity of other possible participants outside my circle of acquaintance, until they contacted me. All potential participants were informed that their choice to participate would not influence their involvement with YouthMADE or AMES in any capacity. Although participant recruitment information was distributed through the administrators of YouthMADE, administrators were not informed of the identity of the individuals who had contacted me for participation in the study. All participants were provided with oral and written descriptions of the nature of the study, as well as their rights as participants (e.g., withdrawal at any point) prior to their participation. All participants provided consent by signing the consent form (Appendix B). To protect confidentiality, participant identities and names of program staff or friends mentioned in the interview were concealed using pseudonyms throughout the study and related documents (e.g., transcripts). Collected data was stored in locked cabinets and secure servers, and maintained separately from participants' identifying information (e.g., contact information), which was used to schedule interview dates and times. Furthermore, participants were provided with copies of their interview transcripts as well as themes from the interview to check for resonance, and provided with opportunity to clarify, correct, or add information to enhance their accounts of program

experience. Although participants were provided again at this point with the option of withdrawing of their data from the study, none chose to withdraw their data.

Chapter III: Results

This chapter outlines the themes emerging from the interviews and my interpretation. Each participant (identified by pseudonyms) is first described briefly below in the order that they were interviewed. Contextual information surrounding their program experience outlined below provides a holistic picture of the participants as a group, and explores the backgrounds that give rise to the themes to follow.

Alex. Alex is a 22-year-old Indigenous Aboriginal who identifies as queer and two-spirited, and uses the pronoun “they”. Prior to their involvement with YouthMADE, they were involved in another youth media program focusing on producing youth media about violence prevention and awareness. They described that prior to involvement in that program, they had felt disconnected from their community due to frequent moves in childhood and struggle with their identity as a half-Caucasian, half-Aboriginal, queer person. They reported that a staff member at this other youth media program encouraged them to apply to YouthMADE. They also described being motivated by the opportunities for creative film-making, building community connections, and exploring “the way [they want] to interact with the world and [themselves]” that YouthMADE presented. They reported having struggled significantly with overt and subtle racism from peers and teachers throughout their school years, which eventually led to them dropping out of high school shortly after their participation in the Production phase of YouthMADE. Since their initial participation in YouthMADE, they have also sustained long-term working relationships with various community youth programs, with particular focus on organizations focusing on Aboriginal youth empowerment and advocacy. Alex identifies as a youth rights activist, and also works as a sexual health educator. In addition to their positions in YouthMADE

and other organizations, they are a spoken word MC. The short film that their group created in the Production phase of YouthMADE focused on Aboriginal identity in Canada. The film incorporated spoken word poetry, and Alex played themselves as the central figure and narrator. They reported that the film script and scenario, while created in collaboration with group members, was based on their struggle with ownership of their Aboriginal ancestry.

Bo. Bo is a 23-year-old man working toward a post-secondary degree in international studies. He identifies as a visible minority. He and his parents are first-generation immigrants who arrived in Canada when he was a school-aged child. He reported having been heavily involved in high school as a leader and advocate for various causes, including environmentalism, prior to his YouthMADE participation. In high school, he was involved in a social justice education class that he described as informative and motivating, and had a group of close friends who were similarly involved and highly engaged in the class, school and community. He had also produced youth media in high school in the form of the student school newspaper, and had planned to collaborate with his friends in creating a documentary on youth experiences across Canada. Bo and his friends were informed of the opportunity to participate in YouthMADE by one of their teachers at school. He reported that as a group, they were motivated to participate in YouthMADE to build filmmaking skills for their planned documentary film. They applied for and participated in YouthMADE together, but did not work together in the same filmmaking groups. Although Bo was not able to join his friends on a cross-country filmmaking trip as originally planned due to other life circumstances, he remained engaged with YouthMADE and is still currently involved as a workshop facilitator. Outside of

YouthMADE, he mentors youth in a peer education program and does facilitation work with various other community organizations. Bo's filmmaking group in the Production phase created an animated film reflecting Bo's perception of immigrant experiences and immigration policies in Canada. In 2011, Bo's film became a source of contention when a funding agency supporting AMES raised objection to the criticism of the Canadian government in Bo's film. When the program administrators refused to remove the film from the YouthMADE curriculum, the agency distanced themselves from the project (e.g., removed funder logos).

Cathy. Cathy is a 21-year-old woman who identifies as Asian-Canadian. Cathy attended high school and took a social justice education course with Bo, and is one of the friends who had planned the cross-country filmmaking project on Canadian youths' experiences. She collaborated with friends to create a film on Canadian youth experiences following the Production phase of YouthMADE. Like Bo, Cathy was heavily involved in social activism in her high school and community, and had been engaged in journalism and media production prior to YouthMADE. She reported having been passionate about several causes in high school, including environmentalism. Currently, she is pursuing post-secondary education in a related field, and is employed in a community organization that provides services to marginalized populations, including youth. Her group's short film revolved around issues of queer identity, discrimination, bullying, and tolerance. In 2012, I had attended a workshop facilitated by Cathy and another co-facilitator at a school district office, and had met her briefly.

Overall Theme Structure

Five superordinate themes emerged across participants' accounts of the YouthMADE participation experience: program experience as a *setting for self-exploration*, as an *opportunity for learning*, as a *platform for affecting change*, as a *challenge*, and as a *community*. Taken together, these themes represent the collective long-term experience of participation in YouthMADE. Descriptions of themes are accompanied by participant quotes from interview transcripts. All themes and accompanying sub-themes as well as representation of each sub-theme in participants' accounts are outlined below.

Table 1. Categories and sub-themes by participation

	Alex	Bo	Cathy
I. YouthMADE experience as avenue for self-exploration			
A. Self-questioning	X	X	X
B. Self-acceptance	X		X
II. YouthMADE experience as opportunity for learning			
A. Acquiring anti-oppression knowledge and language	X	X	X
B. Building skills	X	X	X
C. Contextualizing experiences	X	X	X
III. YouthMADE as platform for affecting change			
A. Self-expression	X	X	X
B. Empowering others	X		X
IV. YouthMADE experience as a challenge			
A. Stress		X	X
B. Vulnerability	X	X	X
V. YouthMADE as a community			
A. Belonging	X	X	X
B. Support	X	X	X
C. Separation from other spheres	X		X

Theme 1: YouthMADE Experience as a Setting for Self-Exploration

Experiences of self-exploration over the course of program experience were represented across all three participant accounts. This theme encompassed exploration of one's own identity, skills, experiences, as well as their significance. The process of self-

exploration within the YouthMADE experience was described to occur in the form of two broad processes: self-questioning, and self-acceptance. Each sub-theme is discussed with excerpts from interview transcripts.

Self-questioning: "It makes you question [the] grounds you're standing on..."

The experience of questioning, doubting, and revisiting one's own beliefs, values, abilities, and commitment to them was a shared experience among participants. Bo and Cathy both described significant reflection and self-questioning following challenging experiences with negative reactions to their films and workshops. Bo described having his perceptions of his own Canadian immigrant experience destabilized and reexamined with a critical eye after critiques about the validity and legitimacy of his immigrant experience. He also described a significant moment of self-doubt regarding his own film when the film came under scrutiny by one of the YouthMADE's government-based funders. The funding agency had requested that Bo's film be removed from YouthMADE curricula. During this time, Bo reported questioning his commitment to social activism through his film, and the validity of his message and experiences as an immigrant. He related having experienced significant confusion, doubt, and conflicted views on the validity of his own film, beliefs, experiences, and commitment to sharing his message. His self-doubt accumulated to the point of him briefly considering his film to be inappropriate for sharing with the public.

I remember at one point being really uncomfortable about it even being up? And just because, I didn't understand the controversy part....I was like, maybe I'm wrong, like maybe this isn't what I really wanted to say. Like, maybe my idea isn't coming across like I want it to, and I didn't know what my idea was... I remember like, maybe it's not.... maybe I *am* against my own video, I remember like at some point being like,

yeah, I agree with you, it's [not right], wait that's not what I said in the video, wait, like what's going on now?

Bo's experience of self-questioning revealed a moment of doubt about his right and ability to communicate his perspective through film. His account also highlights internal stress involved in resolving dissonance between his commitment to his film and activism, and his self-doubt from the negative responses to the film.

Self-questioning occurred on multiple levels and in different areas of being, including competence, commitment to own messages and activism, and identity. Alex questioned their right to identify as an Aboriginal person, as a half-Aboriginal person who often passes for Caucasian within their social context. Their self-questioning of their racial identity is discussed below in the subtheme of Self-acceptance. Cathy related a moment of self-questioning her own ability as a filmmaker. Bo and Cathy both reported having developed a greater degree of openness as a result of their self-questioning processes. They described openness as a state of remaining open to self-questioning, despite high commitment to their activism and current set of values. However, they also described the discomfort associated with self-questioning as a necessary part of their activist work. Cathy described the vulnerability of remaining constantly open to self-questioning:

I felt really vulnerable, and really insecure, and, I know, because I know I made that film, and what are people going to say, oh my god, I don't know, but oh...what are people going to say about...like, what I have to say? So it did make me feel very exposed, but maybe in a good way, it's something we all have to learn to live with...

Bo reported currently feeling proud of his film for its ability to facilitate discussions on the issues of immigration and racism, and stated that the process of self-questioning is a

perpetual, ongoing task involved in activism, where his ideas are always open to challenges, discussions, and critique. Like Bo, Cathy's account suggested evidence of questioning her film and the film's message. She also acknowledged that the self-questioning and vulnerability as an inevitable aspect of social activist work.

While they acknowledged having felt shaken by the experience, participants also identified the self-questioning experience as a valuable opportunity that facilitated learning and introspection. Self-questioning was also described as a possible avenue for positive change, toward enhancing own beliefs and values. Bo's experience of self-questioning was ultimately reported to have facilitated introspection, leading to a self-reported deeper understanding of his own values and the significance of his film.

I guess when you're challenged, it also makes you question your own grounds that you're standing on.... what I'm saying is making *you* uncomfortable, and why is what *you're* saying making *me* uncomfortable? And *then* it makes you think....what am I saying, like, why am I thinking this?...I think in the long run it led to a deeper understanding of my own views and my own identity.

This description of the self-questioning process also conveys how self-questioning also facilitated empathy and understanding of alternative perspectives, and richer understanding of own beliefs.

Self-acceptance: "Learning to love myself, and to share that love"

Consistent with one prominent academic definition of self-acceptance (Cordova, 2001), the subtheme of self-acceptance encompassed participants' experiences of embracing and taking ownership of various aspects of their experiences and identity. Participants also used the term "self-love" to describe this sense of acceptance. Two of the

participants, Alex and Cathy, described the process of coming to self-acceptance as a significant process and outcome of their experience in the Production phase, and attributed it partly and directly to their program experiences. This achievement of self-acceptance was described as a critical step in creating necessary conditions for their continuing involvement in activism and the Outreach phase of YouthMADE.

Alex's account of their progress toward self-love in YouthMADE reflects their past struggle with identity, particularly around their racial identity as a half-Aboriginal, half-Caucasian individual. Alex explained that prior to YouthMADE, they had experienced a sense of exclusion from both cultures. In particular, they related a heavy sense of guilt regarding their right to identify as an Aboriginal person, or discuss their experiences as an Aboriginal person due to their history of being excluded for "looking too white". This guilt emerged during the creation of their group's film, when they had refused to act as the narrator and central character of the film on Aboriginal youth identity, despite the film being based on their own experience. This excerpt illustrates Alex's guilt and disconnection from their racial identity, and the mentors' and peers' support that helped them feel control over their racial identity.

When came the time to actually do the filming, and I was like, I don't want to be that person on camera, and Meghana [the program administrator] and Dot and Sam [the program mentor and peer] were all telling me, why don't you want to do this? And I was like, well, it might be a little confusing because I don't look Aboriginal. And they're like, well that's, that's the beauty of it, Alex. You *are* Aboriginal. Just because you're not brown, or whatever, doesn't mean you're not going to be on camera.

We're not going to grab someone native just to have them for this project, and not

have your words and have their words. We're going to have you, and your group's words....that, that was a big thing for me, coming into it and like, really *owning* my own identity, my own mixed-raced-ness. Oh gosh...(tear welling)....*That's* where I came from....It was the core [of my experience].... [My YouthMADE experience] gave me a lot of confidence to do a lot of other things...after the videoing....I got a job working with an [Aboriginal youth] organization that I also still work with....and then I ended up doing this project [on Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal media], which is Aboriginal youth writing about, or highlighting Aboriginal youth success stories....from there I ended up getting a job at [a youth outreach program], in the Aboriginal youth project, or program I guess....But yeah, I wouldn't have been able to do either of those things without going to YouthMADE, without owning my own Aboriginal ancestry. That's amazing, I never thought of that until now.

Alex identified empowerment and validation from YouthMADE peers and staff as a significant turning point that led to greater self-acceptance. Their description of this experience appeared loaded with emotional significance, and captures a sense of the support and empowerment from the YouthMADE peers, staff, and administrators that enabled the ownership of their identity. This self-acceptance of their racial identity was described as an origin point ("*That's* where I came from") for their further development and activist work later within and outside of YouthMADE. Alex's description suggests that their self-acceptance enabled further engagement with social justice activism opportunities. Their self-acceptance also appeared to have shaped their career progression in a direction relevant to their investment in their racial identity.

Cathy's progress toward self-acceptance also involved aspects of racial identity. She described a process of coming to reject hegemonic ideals in favor of greater self-appreciation from reflecting on her own experiences. She related having "learned to embrace [herself] for who [she is] more after YouthMADE", and a struggle to value her own experiences prior to her YouthMADE experience:

I think before YouthMADE, there was an idealized image of the person [that's] very perfect and unrealistic and...not encompassing of like everything I am and also everything I went through with my experiences, but at YouthMADE I think I really learned to embrace that...and recognize that's important, what you went through and who you are as a person. You might not be able to picture yourself as maybe this person like a skinny girl with blonde hair and blue eyes, which ideally that's what I feel like I had growing up, and a lot of us want to be when we imagine ourselves, but you're this...other person. And it's totally okay. It's awesome that you're that instead.

Embedded in the descriptions of her process toward self-acceptance is a past struggle in holding herself to an ideal image that alienated her background and experiences as a visible minority. According to Cathy, it was within the context of the program and its stance toward validation and empowerment of marginalized experiences that she came to question her internalization of hegemonic images reflected in mainstream media. Her recognition of the ideals presented in media as unrealistic suggests that she adopted a critical stance toward mainstream media, which allowed for self-appreciation and self-acceptance.

Self-acceptance was also not limited to one's identity as a marginalized or oppressed person. Alex and Bo both directly referenced theoretical understanding and knowledge of oppression in the CRT model, particularly the concept of intersectionality, as having broadened their perception and acceptance of themselves. Intersectionality in the context of YouthMADE and within Critical Race Theory paradigms refers to the multidimensionality of oppression constructs and how oppression in terms of race, sexual orientation, gender, and socioeconomic class play out across contexts and in combination with each other (Delgado et al., 2001). The idea of intersectionality posits a multidimensional, interactional, and dynamic construction of oppression experiences, and necessitates exploration of oppression from multiple levels and within individual contexts. Bo described intersectionality as the idea that "gave [him] an understanding of [his] identity and who [he is] and how to accept [himself]". Alex described their understanding of intersectionality as the driving force behind understanding and "dissecting all parts of [their] identity....including privilege".

Because like, before that, I was like, I'm queer, and I'm native, and low income, I'm so oppressed, and then it was like, oh yeah, I have this and this and this going for you. It's not just a one-way thing. Intersectionality. I'm not just... an Aboriginal person, I'm also someone who has white skin. I'm not just someone who has white skin, I'm also male bodied, I'm not just male bodied, I'm also gender queer, I'm also...whatever else I am.

The emphasis on intersectionality suggests that this process of situating the self within context of multiple institutional power dynamics had made a significant contribution to enriching participants' understanding of themselves. Application of this concept to their

self-identity also enabled participants to examine their own privilege, in addition to their experiences of discrimination, as a part of their experiences within structures of oppression.

Overall, participants' experiences in YouthMADE were conceptualized as having created necessary conditions for them to accept themselves in a broader scope than prior to the program. Empowerment and support from YouthMADE members and theoretical understanding of oppression, particularly intersectionality, was positioned as instrumental and necessary in facilitating self-acceptance. Although self-acceptance was identified as a central outcome of the Production phase, participants also described it as an ongoing process that continually interacts with the process of self-questioning and openness to alternative perspectives and experiences. Alex described self-acceptance as an accomplishment, and as their "life's work...[which they know] is not finished". Like self-questioning, self-acceptance was conceptualized as both a process and a goal within the YouthMADE experience, enabled by empowerment, knowledge, and critical perspectives.

The theme of self-exploration encompassed the ways in which participants explored their self-perceived abilities, identity, beliefs, and backgrounds within the YouthMADE experience. The support and empowerment from peers, mentors, and administrators from YouthMADE was conceptualized as a nurturing setting for building self-acceptance. Participant accounts suggested that self-questioning facilitated by participation acted as catalysts for self-exploration, belief consolidation, and for building an open attitude toward continual self-questioning.

Alex and Cathy collectively described the self-exploration involved in their YouthMADE experiences as a process of "growing into yourself" that set the stage for them

to continue developing as social activists. Similarly, Bo described the openness that resulted from his self-questioning to have equipped him to interact more effectively with individuals who hold different perspectives. Both self-acceptance and self-questioning were identified as ongoing processes inextricably integrated with social activist work. Altogether, the self-exploration from the YouthMADE experience was described as a process of preparing them internally for greater self-understanding, richer interactions with others, and further social activist work. Their exploration also appeared to induce an overall willingness to continually reflect and change, which is often described as a beginning step for enacting social change and growth (Hackman, 2005).

Theme 2: YouthMADE Experience as an Opportunity for Learning

Participants identified learning as a central component of the YouthMADE experience. The theme of learning encompassed acquisition of knowledge from Critical Race Theory-based anti-oppression training, as well as revelations from interactions with program peers, staff, and workshop participants. Broadly speaking, learning occurred in terms of acquiring anti-oppression knowledge and language, building media skills, and contextualizing own experiences. Learning also came from a variety of sources, including presentations on elements of CRT, discussions with peers, sharing own experiences, facilitating workshops, and self-questioning and reflection.

Acquiring anti-oppression knowledge and language: "Having that language allowed me to have those conversations"

Learning about anti-oppression was described to be an empowering experience that enabled participants to help recognize and combat injustices in their personal contexts.

Participants collectively referred to the process of gaining theoretical knowledge in anti-oppression training as “building [social justice] language”, and emphasized the importance of specialized language and vocabulary in their development as activists and in their developing awareness of oppression in everyday contexts. Participants described anti-oppression language acquisition as an important step toward empowerment as well as recognition of injustice and advocating for change, referring to them as “tools [that] YouthMADE really gave [them]....to be *proud* of who [they are]”. The excerpt below from Alex’s interview illustrates how their limitations in social justice knowledge and language prior to YouthMADE participation created frustration, helplessness, and difficulty when faced with prejudice or discrimination.

*Now I see it as racism, but at that time at that time, it’s just, oh, that person’s just not being... politically correct or something. There’s something uneasy about certain words. I feel like now... I am able to explain myself....Language was a *big* thing? Recognizing where prejudices lie, and also how *I* was unintentionally being disrespectful? Just in terms of language, language is a big thing. And also being able to um...explain that to other folks, when they’re being able-listic or disrespectful to certain groups...a lot of the times I was facing things like *ageism*, and like very *subtle* racism like, within an Aboriginal project in a non-Aboriginal organization, a lot of things I had to deal with....and having that language *allowed* me to *have* those conversations.*

Participants explicitly credited their social justice vocabulary for contributing significantly to their sense of empowerment and control about countering oppression. The knowledge and language developed from their program experience was described to

provide participants with common references for discussing oppression experiences among themselves, and with others in the community. Participant descriptions of the oppression they witnessed as being unidentifiable, nameless, largely unaddressed, and tacitly silenced mirrors the silencing of minorities, or of systemic oppression, that occurs in mass media through symbolic annihilation. The frustration they reportedly experienced from being unequipped to call out these issues is also parallel with the powerlessness that comes from lack of outlet for voice and representation, in media and in society at large. Cathy reported that her increased understanding of structural oppression “made [her] look at power and, and privilege in a different way, a different dimension of it and it made [her] validate what happened in my life, which is something [she] didn’t think [she] had before.”

Building media skills: “Having to work really hard for the confidence...and all that was a work in progress”

Participants identified building filmmaking skills as having been a significant factor in their initial motivation to participate in YouthMADE. All participants reported feelings of accomplishment and achievement at having produced their own films, and having trained to gain skills for producing films in the future. Cathy mentioned that she had been able to use the filmmaking skills to produce her own documentary with a group of friends outside of YouthMADE, and acknowledged possibility of producing more films in the future. Although all participants reported having achieved their initial goals of building filmmaking skills, they also did not describe it as the most significant or memorable part of their YouthMADE experiences. Participants generally did not describe learning filmmaking skills as an isolated component of the program experience, but in context of a larger process of collaboratively creating and distributing anti-oppression messages.

Although not the most memorable part of the YouthMADE experience, the skill-building process for both film-making and workshop facilitation was also described as an intense experience that required effort, time, and personal investment. Participants described the process of learning to be filmmakers and workshop facilitators as challenging, encompassing experiences of lacking confidence in oneself, balancing substantial time investment with others aspects of lives, feelings of being overwhelmed, and initial difficulties in creating effective discussions within workshops. Some of these challenges involved in the process are discussed in detail within a separate theme below (Theme 4). However, participants also reported experiencing a sense of growth, empowerment, accomplishment, and confidence associated with development of both film-making and workshop facilitation skills as well.

I remember some days walking out of a workshop and being like, oh man, we really *nailed* that, like it felt so good, so awesome in my heart....[and] I do remember having to work really hard for the confidence to like, facilitate these workshops, you know, and all that was a work in progress.

The experience of media skills development also brought forth personal growth. Cathy described as a moment of growth, achievement, and maturity an instance where her program mentor recommended a significant edit to her film, and taught her the necessity of detaching from her own perspectives and ideas during filmmaking. Although this learning process involved changing an aspect of her group's film to which she had contributed significantly, she identified this instance as a significant learning moment. The excerpt below shows how the experiences of learning and empowerment in YouthMADE were not

limited to those that reinforced and supported their existing ideas, but also in challenging them:

I had suggested this idea where we put in our hands and rip apart this box that says “normal” on it....but then when we saw it, [our mentor] told us it looked really creepy and that we should cut it and everyone agreed...It taught me how to be less attached to like, the work I was doing....also at the time it made me feel really *legit* as a filmmaker. Like I’m making executive decisions, and I’m learning, like this was a grown-up moment, you know, I felt mature, and I was willing to let go of my stuff.

Although participants acknowledged that the explicit skill-building in film-making and facilitation occurred, participant accounts also lent greater prominence and significance to the learning that came from the contextualization of own experiences within those of others, and learning that came from self-questioning. Bo describes his overall learning experience through YouthMADE in terms of both explicit skill building and also a broader, big-picture learning process from interacting with others:

In terms of the facilitation aspect, getting those facilitation skills, and being able to call yourself a facilitator? That’s probably is where most of the...hard learning happened? But...other things just specific to the workshops, where, because we were *in* schools, and going into classrooms, and being in different spaces with different demographics, with different experiences and privileges and all these different things so.... being exposed to views that were *different* from my own, and challenging them....was the *biggest* learning.

Bo's description of his learning in YouthMADE suggests that the "hard" learning supported or supplemented the more fluid learning that occurred through workshops and screenings during dissemination of the films.

Contextualizing own experiences: "I had assumed that that's just...[what] everyone knew"

Participants used the learning and peer interaction involved in the YouthMADE experience to contextualize their own experiences in the frame of systems-level oppression (e.g., racism, sexism), and also against each others' experiences. Participants described the learning that occurred from sharing each others' experiences as "broadening", and significantly different from their own experiences with oppression. At the same time, they also related a sense of kinship and affinity with others' experiences, commenting on their resonance with the discomfort and tacit silencing that underlay their collective experiences. Bo describes the story sharing within the program as a learning experience:

It was my first time getting close to certain kinds of experiences and getting stories that I had never really heard before. Like different struggles, like indigenous struggles... so that was, that was new, and I think our school was, I don't think it ever happened? So just hearing those stories and just getting to know people, and like, exposure to that and how it's different from my experiences, that's probably what made [it] eye opening.

His description suggests a broadening and de-centering of his own frame of reference, and exposure to alternative experiences outside his own reality presented from multiple, non-dominant perspectives. The description of the exchange between peers as "eye opening" suggests that this exposure to novel perspectives and experiences facilitated reflection and critical thinking about his perception of his own experiences and those of others.

Bo's account also suggests an initial assumption of homogeneity in others' experiences with immigrant identities, race, and overall oppression prior to interaction with peers from different backgrounds. Bo also spoke about initially feeling confused at strong reactions that his film on immigrant experiences had evoked from viewers, as he "had *assumed* that that's just...[what] everyone knew", and he "didn't feel like [he] had something super special." He related that hearing about perspectives and experiences of YouthMADE participant peers and workshop participants, combined with anti-oppression knowledge, helped him understand "[his film] from a grander narrative and how it fits into bigger power structures". Alex reported that this process of sharing experiences and reflecting occurs continually with workshop participants, stating that "every time [is] able to talk about anti-oppression, increases [] understanding of it" to this day.

In addition to being able to recognize and challenge others' instances of discrimination, participants also acknowledged that the anti-oppression knowledge and language developed in YouthMADE helped themselves be more respectful, aware, and avoid reinforcing existing power structures. As discussed above in Theme 1, participants also identified understanding of intersectionality to have been an important piece of learning. Learning about intersectionality was described to enhance the scope of their self-acceptance, but also to facilitate deeper understanding and appreciation of others' experiences and its connection to macro-level power structures. Alex describes the experience of connecting elements of their life and their mother's to institutionalized power dynamics:

Like, I'm treated a lot differently than like, say, my mom would be? Who is more, she is darker skinned, sharper jaw, higher like, hairline? You know? So definitely, my life

has been easier than her in that respect? Like I don't get followed around in stores, I'm not accused of shoplifting all the time?

Alex's theoretical knowledge and language around oppression appears to have helped them connect their range of social identities to systems-level issues of power and dominant group privilege. Their recognition of their white privilege relative to their mother's experiences with discrimination also suggests greater empathy for others' experiences facilitated by a greater understanding of the underlying oppression structures.

Overall, learning was described as an ongoing process embedded formally and informally throughout both phases of participants' YouthMADE experiences. The learning facilitated by teachings, discussions, and reflections was also described to bring broader and deeper understanding of participants' own experiences and those of others, particularly in connection to systems-level racism.

Theme 3: YouthMADE Experience as a Platform for Action

This theme encompassed participants' experiences of enacting social change through their participation in YouthMADE. All participants described their drive toward creating social change as a part of their initial motivation to participate in YouthMADE, and also perceived their filmmaking and workshop facilitation as ways of shaping a more equal society. Although participants situated their actions toward change as being facilitated, supported, and enabled within YouthMADE, their accounts demonstrated ownership over their actions as autonomous and self-driven, instead of led or directed by the program. Cathy symbolically described YouthMADE as a setting that supported her actions toward social change:

I feel like my experiences at YouthMADE are like, kind of like a pile of rocks by a pond. I know I'm supposed to pick up these pebbles, and throw them in the pond, and when I do, they send out a ripple. Of change. I feel like [YouthMADE] was that place, with the lake and the pile of rocks.

This representation encapsulates participants' autonomy in their participation within the program, and their independent but supportive relationship with the program. Although participants uniformly and independently identified their YouthMADE experience as transformative, they also described themselves as having been active agents in creating their transformation as well as in creating change in others. The description also situates creating change, and enabling others to change as a main outcome and objective of participation, which is consistent with how all participants of the study described the participation experience. Participant accounts demonstrated two main avenues of creating social change, which is described below in the two subthemes of self-expression and enabling others to act.

Self-expression: "Being able to talk about [my experiences]"

Participants recognized that YouthMADE provided a means for them to share their personal experiences and anti-oppression messages more effectively. Alex, Bo, and Cathy all described having applied for participation in YouthMADE with intent and motivation to create change through films already in place. They described a sense of personal investment in their films, using them as ways to translate their perspectives and experiences to a broader audience. In addition to providing opportunities for learning the skills necessary to create films and facilitate discussion, the program also enabled their message to be heard by people who were seen as less accessible to the participants'

experiences. Alex describes the film screenings and workshops held through YouthMADE as opportunities to share their experiences and messages on Aboriginal rights in contexts where they had not previously felt comfortable enough to voice their opinions.

There's this other time when we had....a screening at the VSB? For a bunch of teachers, and also the superintendent was there? ...And I remember just doing this workshop and showing the video and being able to talk about it, and talk about why, my...experiences with racism made it so difficult for me to be in school..... My perspective was, actually these issues *are* real because I actually like, left school because of these things... Not to say that YouthMADE made me drop out of school.

Alex's experience with this particular workshop illustrates how the YouthMADE experience created opportunity for them to communicate their experience of racism and advocate for social justice in schools to education professionals, whom they had previously considered to be their oppressors. Although the process of sharing personal experiences is not without challenges and vulnerability, Alex described this process of sharing their experiences as having been validating and rewarding for its potential to create change among teachers and education professionals. Similarly, Bo also reported ultimately appreciating how his film, despite controversy, was able to "create a discussion around issues that seriously impact a large segment of Canadian society", which he described as an avenue of change.

Participants also situated their film creation and dissemination as a way of countering the lack of their perspectives or representations in society, and by association, mainstream media. Cathy's commitment to disseminating the films were partly based on her knowledge of her family's experience as immigrants, and her observation of their experiences being silenced in society.

I really struggle with [the Canadian immigration] system because I'm always told to be grateful for the system, but all the loopholes they had to jump through, I also know it's an exploitative system, and I know it's damaging in a lot of ways? And it pretty much allows people to be relocated, to a new home, and a whole different meaning otherwise. I think it's because of my parents' experience, and I know what they went through with the system, and how everything is set up nicely to them and rosy on the outside, being an immigrant here but I know their experiences are not really like that. It makes me more invested in [disseminating] film workshops, and more dedicated.

Her description of the invisibility of her family's immigrant experience as a motivating factor for her role as a social justice educator through YouthMADE workshops suggests an awareness of societal silencing of immigrant experiences, and intent to challenge this invisibility with exposure and education outreach through films.

Enabling others: "Inspiring the next generation of...young activists"

Enabling, inspiring, and empowering others to take action and create change was another form of social activism that participants shaped through their YouthMADE experience. Participants described this process as a natural transfer of their own learning and empowerment within YouthMADE to others. Cathy described this drive to transfer her experience to others as having been her motivation to continue on to the Outreach phase of YouthMADE. The experience of empowering and connecting with workshop participants and film viewers was identified as one of the most rewarding aspects of the program and strong motivation to continue participation. Cathy identified as one of her most memorable

experiences in YouthMADE a moment of connection and shared inspiration between herself and one of her workshop participants:

After this one workshop, I remember doing an introduction and being like, this is who I am, and this is the racism and sexism I faced in high school, and we had a really good workshop, and after that, this one girl coming up to me and being like, can I have your autograph? And I was like, yeah, of course, I wish I could get your autograph! And like, it was a huge defining moment for me. No one had asked for my autograph before. It wasn't that she asked for my autograph, like I'm such a big person or anything, but.... it meant my presence and story meant a lot to her. I think we talked about conceptions of beauty that time and what it meant to be a young woman growing up in society with all these different expectations of who you are. And I think it meant a lot to her and she was like, you're really inspiring and I was like, oh my god that was so good, it was the most touching moment ever! ...That was a defining moment.

Her description illustrates the sense of reward involved in having inspired others with stories of her personal experiences, and having her experiences be valued by others.

Alex likewise described empowerment and connection with workshop participants as a source of reward, hope, and inspiration. They added that their interactions with them facilitated self-reflection and learning regarding “[their] prejudice against younger kids, like, oh... they're kids, they won't understand.” Alex described having been surprised by the workshop participants' capacity for understanding ideas of CRT, open-minded attitudes, and enthusiasm toward creating social change. Alex identified as an outcome of the Outreach phase a sense of “hope for the next generation of young people, and young

activists....[which] was the best thing ever”. Bo similarly described the Outreach phase as “intergenerational”. Both participants’ description of the workshop participants as a new generation of activists conveys respect for the participants and their potential to create change, and situates the facilitators as the current generation of social activists. This parallel implies significance of the Outreach phase workshops as a torch-passing event and transfer of knowledge, beliefs, and values between the facilitators and workshop participants. Sense of optimism from supporting these younger social activists was also described as helpful in countering cynicism that they developed from “looking at the world so critically”.

Alex also reported experiencing the sense of reward more easily in long-term engagements with a classroom or group, with multiple workshops scheduled over the course of 2-4 weeks. They reported that this format enabled personal connections with the workshop participants, and made the experience more interactive, rather than being “like dropping all this knowledge on them”. His account implies that building personal connection with workshop participants is a significant factor in experiencing a sense of reward. Although Bo and Cathy did not express preference for workshop schedule formats or identify any challenges in feeling a sense of creating change, all participants identified interactions and individual connections with workshop participants as an enjoyable and rewarding aspect of the program experience.

Theme 4: YouthMADE Experience as a Challenge

Despite the sense of reward, hope, achievement, and empowerment involved in the YouthMADE experience, participants also noted challenges in participation throughout.

Participants' descriptions of challenges embedded in their participation experience were grouped into the following subthemes of stress and vulnerability.

Stress: "The pain of being aware"

Participant descriptions of their program experience touched on the intensity of their work as filmmakers and workshop facilitators. Although generally perceived as valuable and transformative, the participation experience was also reported to require significant time and effort throughout both phases of the program. The high effort and commitment involved in the participation experience, as well as the challenge of balancing the YouthMADE participation experience with other aspects of participants' lives were described to create stress. Cathy described her experience of struggling to make room in her life for YouthMADE:

It was very immersive... it was really intense. I remember it demanded a lot of me, and it withdrew me out of my own life to be able to do that.....It was a bit [hard] because at that time I was in Grade 12, and we had school, and I'm pretty sure I was worried about homework and stuff like that, but it was good. I love [the YouthMADE experience] a lot, it was quite transformative.... it was challenging at some points in time, to sometimes stay up all night and make videos, and also to... always critically open yourself up to reflect upon your past and like, your struggles and experiences, it was hard I think, but it was definitely well worth it, and something I'd never done before in my life.

Bo, who attended the same school as Cathy, reported facing similar challenges with balancing his school life and YouthMADE experience. He also related stress involved in staying up all night for the first time in his life to complete his animated film during the

filmmaking phase of the program. An additional source of stress for Bo were the changes that occurred in his filmmaking group, where many members of the group with which he had created the film script and outline had dropped out of the program prior to shooting. However, he identified the most significant source of stress to come from the continual process of self-questioning and reflection involved throughout the Production and Outreach phases of YouthMADE. The following excerpt is his final comment on his YouthMADE participation experience, which he represented with a symbol of a lens:

One thing I remember saying was that it was like a lens, that was given to me that I put on, and I can't really take off.... In some ways. it's like the pain of being aware. Like I wish I could be ignorant and be happy that way, but...No. Like, if I didn't care what went on in the world, it would make life easier, but at the same time, it's like, no, don't be silly, no.

Bo's account reflects the complexity of the program experience, acknowledging its value as a transformative experience and also as a challenge that requires the stress of constant self-examination. He symbolically described his YouthMADE experience as a lens that changed his perspective, but also specified a sense of being bound by this change, and the irreversibility of his transformation. In this comparison, he included the stress of constant self-reflection and the critical perspective that constitutes the "pain of being aware" as central, defining traits of his experience. Cathy also described a similar sense of coming to "[look] at the world in a different way...such a *critical* way to look at the world...[is] sometimes very isolating, sometimes very.... cynical, [and it brings] a lot of pessimism". Her description also conveys this sense of stress and cynical outlook from heightened awareness of social justice issues.

Vulnerability: "Being so challenged from the stance that we [are] on"

Participants also reported a sense of vulnerability from participation, which encompassed feelings of insecurity, sense of failure, and fear of their personal experiences being invalidated. Cathy described a moment of personal vulnerability that made her question her skills as a facilitator and her involvement in YouthMADE:

I remember walking into the classroom [for my first workshop] and being so challenged from the stance that we were on....The kids there ate us alive! You know, they disagreed with everything on the video, they did not validate our experiences? Like I don't remember the teacher being a very good ally, the kids were storming out of the classroom, and we didn't know how to deal with it. [Afterwards], I never want[ed] to walk back to this classroom, you know, and I felt like I really failed myself, and I failed AMES, and all that stuff at the time, having all these problems, and calling up Meghana [the program administrator] and being like "Meghana, we really messed up!" and stuff, you know?....It does take a lot of vulnerability, out of people, it makes people take an extra step, and put themselves out there, and do things differently....I was pretty triggered in that classroom and I learned to deal with my triggers in a really different way.

Her experience highlights the stress and insecurity felt by participants in acting as facilitators, and as representatives of AMES and YouthMADE. Due to the interactive nature of the YouthMADE workshops, workshop participants' resonance with the showcased film or facilitator experiences was described to create stressful situations and challenges in facilitating discussion, as exemplified in this occasion. Cathy's struggle with having workshop participants reject the validity of her experience with oppression was also later

described as “triggering”, in that it evoked defensive response due to her emotional investment in her film and stories.

Bo also acknowledged this vulnerability involved in opening personal experiences of oppression to critique and rejection, stating that this invalidation and denial from the group “creates frustration, and makes you angry like, why don’t you understand? This is a national experience, it was my experience, but... it happens to a lot of people.... I’m saying it and you’re not hearing me, like what’s happening?”. Both Bo and Cathy related the necessity of learning not to take others’ reactions to their experience personally, and developing ways of self-care. Participants who described this sense of feeling vulnerable to invalidation also described questioning whether to continue their YouthMADE experience as a result of feeling invalidated, suggesting that this aspect of their program experience presented the greatest risk to sustaining their participation. Cathy emphasized the importance of self-care in participation, and described how she learned to set aside her perspectives and experiences as a way of coping:

I was defensive and emotionally vested, and like, “that’s not true what you’re saying, immigrants aren’t taking your jobs”, whatever that was going on. They were saying, if they’re coming here they should try to speak our language. I remember I would get into these arguments, like not even arguments, but trying to diplomatically prove them wrong, but then I realized, Cathy, that’s not what it’s about. It’s not about what you think anymore, it’s about drawing out conversations about what their classmates think. Right? So from that, I learned to like, take a step back. At that moment, what I should have done is take a step out the classroom, and be like, I can’t do this right now, and then be like, okay, how did we do with this, what did you

folks think? In terms of dealing with triggers, I learned to not it personally, which I did that first time, and, I learned how to facilitate better.

Cathy's account conveys her struggle to rein in her perspective while facilitating discussion with individuals who were invalidating her family's immigrant experiences. Her process of learning to distance herself was described to have been a product of introspection, reflection, and self-questioning.

Bo also brought forth an additional vulnerability of potential professional risk. Due to the controversy and strong negative reaction that his film had incited from a large funding agency, he entertained the possibility of discrimination in future employment opportunities at that agency and its related bodies. Although he recognized that discrimination based on his association with the film would be unlikely, he also stated that repercussions from his critique on Canadian immigration policies was "in the realm of possibility" from some organizations and government bodies.

Theme 5: YouthMADE as a Community

The theme of community encompassed participants' sense of belonging and connection with others within the program, as well as the empowerment and support provided within the program. Participants distancing themselves from other spheres of belonging as they became more involved in the community of YouthMADE were also included in this theme. Subthemes of belonging, support, and distance from other spheres are discussed below.

Belonging: "The connections were so deep within ourselves, and with each other"

The subtheme of belonging generally refers to participants' connections and sense of common pursuit toward social justice shared with other participants, mentors, program

administrators, and workshop participants. Participants described their belonging in YouthMADE and the depth of connections built over the participation experience as important aspects of the experience that added value to their experience and sustained their involvement. Despite differences in background, all participants reported feeling a sense of belonging, acceptance, and affinity with other program peers within the first week of their participation, and attributed this closeness to their personal investment in the program and the intensity of sharing that occurred throughout the program. For participants like Bo and Cathy, who had been friends before involvement in YouthMADE, their connection was described to have been enriched from the experience.

I made good friends there, that I still keep in touch with, I got to understand and know my friends better from that experience, like my previous friends in high school that I came there with, and... I was just so grateful. I just loved the program after that. The connections were so *deep* within ourselves, and with each other, after that, and so I walked away feeling really happy and grateful, and emotionally vested in the work afterwards I think.

The sense of connections between program peers was reported to also have been a factor in enhancing participants' commitment to the program, as well as rendering the YouthMADE experience more enjoyable and imbuing it with more emotional and social value.

Connections within YouthMADE were also not limited to between program participants, but also described to occur between program participants, program mentors, and program administrators as well. For example, Cathy related experiences of building

relationships with her program mentors, whom she took on as her professional role models:

If this project was so transformative for me, what if we were to bring that to classrooms? Like I would love to be a part of that. And also, there were leaders and facilitators at the time that I really wanted to emulate? Like, I think, Rob and Sana did such a great job facilitating workshops for us, so I was like, I want to lead workshops like that too, I want to be transformative, I want to like, change lives, and make people think about this? So I wanted to do that too.

Cathy's decision to model herself after her program mentors who had influenced her development and learning in her early involvement with YouthMADE suggests that she perceives herself and her mentors as working toward a common goal of establishing social justice in their community. The contrast between Cathy's initial struggle to live up to an impossible image in the media discussed in Theme 1, and her motivation to model herself after her program mentors suggests a shift in her beliefs, priorities, and self-perception between her time of initial involvement, and her current self.

Further evidence of belonging and connection within the program also came from participants' commitment to the program's activities, and desire to "give back" to the program. Alex describes their main motivation to continue YouthMADE participation in such terms:

I felt connected to the work, and I felt like I also wanted to give back a little bit? Because YouthMADE has given me so much, in terms of the video, and the *support*. and the tools, and language and all that stuff. And I felt like I wanted to give back in that respect.

Alex's account suggests a sense of having benefited from their program experience, and a perception of the program experience as a stage of belonging and preparation that provided opportunity for further involvement. When presented with the themes following the interview, Alex also added that the program administrator had played a significant role in creating this sense of community and belonging by modeling inclusion through interactions with participants. Their desire to give back also indicates a desire to continue the process of facilitating and supporting young activists through YouthMADE. Alex also went on to work as a facilitator and youth worker in several other organizations that involve youth, Aboriginal advocacy, and media through professional connections they built in YouthMADE. Their participation experience can also be considered to have facilitated their belonging to not only the YouthMADE program, but also within the professional community to which YouthMADE belongs.

Support: "Sometimes you just need to be covered"

Support, encouragement, and validation from program peers and staff were aspects of the experience that appeared to empower participants in creating films and sharing their experiences. Bo described a sense of validation and ownership regarding his creativity and artistic skills that had been brought forth by mentors' and peers' encouragement during the Production and Outreach phases. He related a moment of "...realization that [he] can draw....a self-realization of [his] own skill" that he had previously minimized as non-essential. Alex and Cathy also both described the group's encouragement as having empowered them to share their experiences of oppression. Alex described their guilt regarding their right to discuss their experiences as an Aboriginal person due to history of being excluded from other Aboriginal peers for "looking too white". Cathy reflected that

“[YouthMADE] was the first time that [she] spoke about [her] family or told their story or look at the racism that they went through”, and “feeling really empowered tomake these films” after reflecting on and sharing her experience within the group. Alex and Cathy’s experiences are marked by hesitation and uncertainty about the legitimacy of their experiences and racial identity, which were ameliorated by the external validation from program peers and staff. Central to their descriptions of opening their experiences to other people for the first time in YouthMADE was an assumption that their previous contexts and social circles did not validate their identity and struggle with oppression. Empowerment from in-group support at YouthMADE was described to have played an important role in setting the YouthMADE experience apart from other contexts of engagement.

The safety and protection created by the support and empowerment from program participants was identified as an important component of the YouthMADE experience. When asked to assign a symbol to their entire YouthMADE experience, Alex chose the following representation of the support and empowerment they gained from the program:

The shirt I was wearing in [my film]. I still have that shirt? And I think about that? And I think of that shirt being like, almost like a shirt of confidence? If that makes any sense? Like being able to wear that knowledge and wear that confidence on me? Not like an armor, but maybe like.... something that *covers*, but covers not because it’s ashamed, but because you need to be covered sometimes. *Protection (crosses hands across chest)*.

Their account suggests that this sense of community support, along with confidence and knowledge, created a sense of safety for Alex, in contrast to other settings (e.g., school) in which they had previously felt vulnerable. Although they had not explicitly discussed

significance of the YouthMADE program administrators' contribution to their program experience during the interview, Alex commented following the interview that the program administrator interacted regularly and actively throughout both phases of YouthMADE and played an important role in creating an overall tone of support, respect, and empathy throughout the program experience. Bo's description of the program administrators' support and validation of his film during the period of controversy with the funding agency further demonstrates the significant role of program administrator in creating the culture of support within the program:

Like, Meghana had my back the whole time, like she was like. I'm not taking this off the curriculum just because the [agency] is saying so, like so she gave up her funding. It's her livelihood. She lives off those grants. To say no to [that] just because of my work is....yeah. I felt super supported.

Separation from other spheres of life: "I felt like I was in a different place from them"

As participants in YouthMADE developed a sense of community within the program, and underwent changes in perspective, self-perception, learning, and commitment to activism, they also described a sense of isolation and distance from their existing social circles or family. As Bo's description of the "pain of being aware" in Theme 4 suggests, the transformative experiences in YouthMADE separated YouthMADE participants from their peers outside the program who had not shared that same process of development. A sense of separation and isolation from peers outside the program was described to have occurred due to the gaps in their knowledge base, and the challenges in communicating their learning and activism to others. According to Cathy, the closeness that developed between the program participants engendered a sense of solidarity against outsiders, like "it was

[them] against the world". She described her sense of isolation from peers and frustration with translating her transformative experience to others outside the program in the following extract:

It did make me feel really frustrated, like understanding these things but not having my other friends understand the same thing, like I went through this transformative experience, but I wasn't able to express that to anybody that didn't go to camp with me? Right? So I think...I felt like I was in a different place from them and it was harder to communicate what that was like, and plus I didn't have the language for it that much, and also they don't have the language or vocabulary, like what are they talking about, what does it mean? And the culture I was immersed in at camp is really different from how we usually interact at school, so I was trying to balance and negotiate all of that, and in the end I made myself...like, balance, exist in both realms. And it worked out in the end, right? But yeah, I hadn't really transferred what I learned at YouthMADE to how I interact with people at school, and how that plays out into interpersonal relationships? I think it took a longer build.

Consistent with participants' identification of language as being a significant tool for understanding and contextualizing experiences of oppression, limitations in peers' knowledge of social justice language stood out as a core factor in the challenge of translating the program experience to others outside the program. The limitations in transferring the program experience to personal contexts also suggests challenges in acting on their understanding and desire for social change outside of YouthMADE. Cathy also reported a similar struggle in attempting to communicate the significance of her experience and transformation to her parents. She reported experiences of greater distance and

tension from her parents due to their difficulty understanding her increased commitment and time spent on YouthMADE.

In Alex's case, they also described distancing themselves from school once they came to recognize the racism they faced from their peers and teachers for being half-Aboriginal. They ultimately dropped out shortly after completing the filmmaking phase of YouthMADE, choosing instead to focus on developing their career as a youth, media, and Aboriginal issues worker. For both Alex and Cathy, their experiences of learning, belonging, and commitment to YouthMADE served to distance them from existing spheres of involvement.

Distancing occurred both as an unintentional separation, involving struggle to bridge understandings of non-participants, and as an intentional distance and displacement in favor of a more accepting and welcoming group, as in Alex's case. Cathy's description of this feeling of separation as being "[like] us against the world" encapsulates the contrast between this sense of community within the program against their isolation from non-program individuals. Participants' YouthMADE experience can therefore be considered to have provided a sense of belonging and community, but also distanced participants from their precious circles of belonging.

Chapter IV: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the long-term experiences of YouthMADE participants, as well as the personal significance that YouthMADE held for them. This chapter outlines a summary of the results, and discusses significant findings in connection to literature on youth development, engagement, and youth media programs. Limitations and strengths of the study and its implications for practice and future research are also discussed.

Based on my interpretation of the identified themes, the collectively rendered picture of participants' YouthMADE experience was that of a transformative and meaningful event in their lives. The participation experience in YouthMADE enabled and catalyzed participants' exploration and development, both within themselves and in the context of their communities. Transformation occurred in terms of developing awareness, acquiring knowledge, building belonging, commitment to activism, empowerment, and self-exploration. The phenomenological exploration of convergence and divergence in participant accounts served to determine an overall description and significance of the participants' lived experience that transcends individual contexts. The section below describes this overall picture of the experience, contextualizes its significance within the research, and explores further directions for future work.

Summary of Results: Lived Long-term Experiences of Participation in YouthMADE and Their

Meaning

Long-term participation in YouthMADE was described as a full youth engagement experience that was empowering, rewarding, educational, and intense, as well as challenging. The intensity of the experience applied to the support and connections

between program members, but also to the mental and physical toll and the continual self-reflection required of activists. Although these challenges were described as emotionally draining, participants described the self-questioning and vulnerability as necessary components of the participation experience that had facilitated greater self-understanding, learning, and openness.

The intense self-questioning and vulnerability involved in the experience was tempered and balanced by the empowerment and sense of supportive community within the program. Described as a phase of “growing into yourself”, the empowerment and support from program members in the initial phase of participation created a sense of community and facilitated self-acceptance among participants. This empowerment set the stage for participants to engage themselves in activist work with fewer internal barriers and reservations, and allowed them a safe place for their work and self-exploration. For Alex, whose previous struggle with their racial identity had prevented them from contributing to Aboriginal advocacy, their YouthMADE experience facilitated a transformative process toward self-acceptance and provided the support and empowerment that acted as their “protection” within and outside of the program.

However, participants also acknowledged experiences, people, and events outside YouthMADE as having brought forth these changes. As Alex stated, “there were a lot of other factors in my life that went into [creating my current self]”. Cathy identified her friends, family, and involvement in other advocacy and activism opportunities as some factors that contributed to her current self-perception and perspectives. Bo similarly credited his other avenues of advocacy and activism and involvement in other youth organizations to have been factors in the development of his critical perspective.

Transformation also took place in participants' perception of oppression in their communities. Social justice language was uniformly identified as an important tool that participants gained and used to understand, navigate, and work against social injustice in their daily lives. The theoretical knowledge on anti-oppression and contextualization of experiences within structures of oppression through interaction with program peers was described to develop a critical perspective of society and oppression, which Bo likened to a lens that he cannot remove.

YouthMADE also acted as a community of practice and support between its members, mentors, and administrators. The empowerment occurring between program participants was described as a key factor of the program experience that enabled learning, activism, confidence building, and overall development. The sense of protection and community created by this atmosphere of empowerment was identified as a feature of the program experience, that made them feel as if "it was [them] against the world". An overall sense of deep connection was described to have been felt between participants and program members from as early as the Production Phase of the program. However, this sense of community within themselves also served to create separation from other spheres of interaction. In particular, participants described feelings of discomfort and frustration toward peers who did not share or empathize in their transformation. In this way, the sense of community within the program created a safe place and allowed chances for connection between participants, but also distanced the participants from some of their existing areas of involvement.

Situating Findings In Current Literature

Participants' descriptions of experiences in YouthMADE reflected and supported some ideas present in the literature on youth development, youth engagement, and youth media programs. Aspects of the experience as described by participants aligned with existing research, but also raised further questions and suggested future directions for research.

Personal transformation: Identity work

Consistent with literature on long-term youth engagement facilitating identity development (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger & Alisat, 2007), participants' descriptions of their self-exploration in YouthMADE reflected elements of identity work as defined by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966). The intense self-exploration involved in the YouthMADE experience, particularly in participants' experiences of self-questioning and re-evaluating their own beliefs, values, and self-perception, demonstrates evidence of active identity work facilitated by their program participation. Participants' descriptions of self-exploration as being brought on directly by the experience of showing their films to others, or by facing oppositional perspectives and attitudes to their involvement, suggests that the program experience was a direct factor or cause in facilitating identity work. Participants also described a sense of having emerged from this period of self-questioning with a self-perceived growth in their understanding of their own perspectives, opinions, and identity. A greater sense of commitment to their identity as social activists, and as workshop facilitators following this period of questioning were also reported.

This process of self-examination and commitment to values and beliefs outlined in descriptions of the YouthMADE participation experience aligns with the concept of an

identity crisis period as defined by Marcia (1966). The YouthMADE experience involved upheaval and self-examination of previously held beliefs and values that characterizes Marcia's concept of identity moratorium, a period of crisis during which intense identity work takes place. Also consistent with Marcia's proposed progression of the crisis period, participants reached resolution of their self-questioning with varying degrees of consolidation and reprioritization of their existing values. Participants' renewed commitment to their activism and self-acceptance demonstrate that the identity exploration and self-examination facilitated in YouthMADE was not limited to a single domain, but unique to each individual. This variety suggests that each participant interpreted the training, discussions, and exercises from the program experience through their own personal backgrounds and interests, resulting in personal, unique impacts from program participation for each participant. This diversity also supports the notion that the program experience and the teachings of ideas based on Critical Race Theory (CRT) that were common to all participants' experiences did not work to engender a common perspective, but allowed for individually determined, personalized experiences of participation and identity development.

Racial identity was a dimension of identity that was emphasized in participants' program experiences. This focus on race may have been because participants found race to be the most salient aspect of their identities, or because the program experience itself emphasized aspects of race identity in its theoretical training. Racial identity development explored in Alex and Cathy's accounts of their program experience demonstrated some alignment with existing models of racial identity in literature. More specifically, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's Minority Identity Development model (1993) outlines three stages of

identity development for individuals belonging to a minority group, where one transitions from preference for the dominant group's values and behaviors over those of one's own minority group (Conformity Stage) to resisting and excluding those values in favor of those associated with their own minority group (Resistance and Immersion Stage), and ultimately reaching a Synergistic Articulation and Awareness stage where values and behaviors from both groups are applied selectively. Cathy's description of her previously idealized self-image as an unattainable Caucasian esthetic and her ultimate rejection of this image in favor of self-appreciation reflects some elements of the Conformity and Resistance and Immersion Stages. However, Cathy's description of this transition situated it as a process toward accepting herself on multiple dimensions, without positioning her own cultural group against those of the dominant group. Her resolution therefore focused more on her ability to love and appreciate her own abilities and experiences, and reflected a balance between her identities as a social activist, friend, and family member than between her cultural contexts. Similarly, Alex's initial struggle to identify as Aboriginal as well as Caucasian also reflected difficulty in integration of racial identity, but did not reflect a preference for either of their two backgrounds. Their description of racial identity development also focused on integrating multiple aspects of themselves, but no experience of transitioning between preferences for one culture over another.

Results suggest that participants' identity work was concerned more with integrating multiple aspects of their identity in terms of different types of oppression, than with the duality of rejecting and preferring one group over another outlined in the Minority Identity Development model. Participant accounts relate and emphasize how understanding of intersectionality and its application to their identities enabled participants

integrate and embrace multiple intersecting social statuses simultaneously. The process of “dissecting all parts of identity....including privilege” as described by Alex in their journey toward self-acceptance reflects active, conscious choice to identify with multiple aspects of the self, in terms of multiple oppressions acting on their identity.

This integration of multiple statuses corresponds more closely to Reynolds and Pope’s Multidimensional Identity Model (1991) and to the fullest level of identity resolution posited by that model. Their model outlined a quadrant of possible outcomes of identity work for those belonging to multiple oppressed groups, aligned on dimensions of multiple oppression vs. single oppression, and of active vs. passive identification with their identity as a member of oppressed groups (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Given possible risks of limiting identity development to single dimensions, this outcome of active ownership of belonging to multiple oppressed groups was largely presented as the optimal outcome (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The participant accounts of racial identity development and self-acceptance suggest that their multiple identities were negotiated and embraced through training on CRT, and empowerment from in-group YouthMADE peers.

Participants explicitly acknowledged the significance of the YouthMADE experience on their self-acceptance and self-questioning. However, participants also acknowledged that factors outside of YouthMADE also played significant roles in their identity development and self-acceptance, consistent with literature’s emphasis on family background and sociocultural contexts as significant factors in identity construction (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). Although it is not possible to quantify how much of their identity was shaped by the YouthMADE participation experience, the participants described its

impacts on the way they see themselves as having “played a significant role”, “life-changing”, and “transformative”. Based on the descriptions, the YouthMADE experience appears to have been valuable and significant in their development of identity as self-accepting social activists.

Media production and literacy: Program objectives

The primary objective of the YouthMADE program was to help participants build skills in media production, media literacy, workshop facilitation, and anti-oppression knowledge with the eventual goal of enabling them to independently use these tools to create social change. Participants’ accounts reflected successful acquisition of, and sense of competence in film-making, media literacy, and workshop facilitation skills. All participants reported having developed a sense of confidence as filmmakers, and as workshop facilitators leading discussions on media discourse and critique. Accounts also presented application of media critique and analysis toward internalized media images, and emphasis on production of counter narratives, as exemplified by Cathy’s experience with rejecting media representations as ideals. Participant descriptions of their anti-oppression training also suggest that their critique and critical analysis skills were applied not only to media, but also to their perception of their real-life contexts at school and communities. Cathy’s success in using and generalizing her media skills to produce and disseminate her own documentary with a group of friends outside of YouthMADE also exemplifies successful skill building, as well as sense of autonomy, and further suggests that the skills from the program experience was generalized to multiple contexts independently.

The process of gaining filmmaking skills were described to occur largely from interactions and direct teaching by program mentors from the Galiano Island Film and

Television School. However, the autonomy in their film making process and facilitation work were also emphasized throughout participant accounts, with the films, curricula, and workshop facilitation described as being borne out of personal investment and motivation to share their experiences and anti-oppression messages. Consistent with primary program objective, the YouthMADE experience was described to have facilitated participants' independent media production, and encouraged continual engagement in opportunities to work with media, film, and related work (e.g., group discussion facilitation), as evidenced by participants' engagement in these areas outside of YouthMADE contexts. Ultimately, participant accounts traced the successful development of media literacy, media production, and workshop facilitation skills, and consequent enabling of autonomous activities toward social change, another primary objective of YouthMADE.

Overall, results support successful achievement of these program objectives, as well as the conditions under which this achievement occurred. Participants' successful acquisition of these skills, critiques, and specialized knowledge is consistent with successful demonstrations of media literacy skills and media creation skills development across other youth media programs (Campbell, Hoey & Perlman, 2001). In an evaluative sense, results of the study also outline elements of a program theory for YouthMADE, which describes a particular program, predicts its outcomes, clarifies requirements and conditions necessary to bring out this effect, and the mechanisms of this process (Chen & Rossi, 1983; Lipsey, 1993). The results identify validation, support, immersive experience, and reflection as necessary program activities, or "inputs", which give rise to the experiences of empowerment, learning, expression, community-building, and challenges in participation throughout phases. These processes then contribute to the intended

outcomes of activism, anti-oppression knowledge, and independent filmmaking skills, or projected “outputs” of the program. Although other aspects of the program mechanisms, such as the optimal method of delivery, or degree of involvement required to produce intended outcomes are not clarified in this study, the results provide a starting point for developing a program theory of YouthMADE. Results also suggest that the following constructs should be examined in evaluation of the program experience: level of support, administrator responsiveness, participant learning, sense of reward, level of connection with workshop participants, with each other, and sense of satisfaction in participation. The results also appear to support similar conclusions drawn from quantitative studies (e.g., Campbell, Hoey & Perlman, 2001) with regard to the quality of and learning in youth media programs. While the present case study cannot necessarily be generalized to other programs, its findings are expected to be useful in developing a framework for quantitative assessment and may guide future program development and operations.

Calling attention to silenced perspectives: Films for social change

Participant accounts illustrated a process of coming to recognize and reject the discourses that support the invisibility of their experience with oppression. Participants’ understanding of intersectionality, or multiplicity of oppression across contexts, demonstrated in the sub-theme of self-acceptance served to counter and refute the discourses of meritocracy and color-blindness that commonly shield individuals who hold privilege in some contexts from complicity in systemic oppression (Applebaum, 2005). In contrast to these dominant discourses, Alex and Bo’s invocation of intersectionality and acceptance of their privilege as well as oppression highlights the intersection between injustice and privilege, and demonstrates a sense of self-awareness and recognition of the

impact that one's race, gender, or socioeconomic class may bring to experiences. Alex and Cathy countered the discourse of meritocracy and colorblindness by recognizing individual differences in experiences of oppression, and by acknowledging their experiences of oppression as valid.

Participants demonstrated having sensed the silencing, and symbolic annihilation of oppression prior to their YouthMADE involvement without being able to recognize or label the phenomenon. The sense of frustration, helplessness, and discomfort that they experienced from observing but being unequipped to label, counter, or call attention to the injustice corresponds to disempowerment that often accompanies symbolic annihilation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The theoretical training based on ideas of CRT was described to illuminate various ways in which their experiences were silenced, and to allow acknowledgment of the invisibility of their own experiences, and. Participants reported being motivated to make and disseminate films as a way to call attention to their experiences of oppression, which is a way of combatting status quo, and including oneself in the greater narrative from which they were alienated (Hull & Katz, 2006).

To sum, participants' processes of coming to recognize and voice experiences of oppression involved dismantling of common discourses used in society to render oppression invisible. Participants used their anti-oppression training, as well as their filmmaking skills, in a conscious effort to counter the invisibility of their experiences in the mainstream media and society as a whole.

Story-telling as a method of empowerment and community-building

Consistent with literature on the function of story-telling as a method of empowerment and creating belonging (Hull & Katz, 2006), results conveyed an emphasis

on sharing personal stories as a process of learning and empowerment. Participant accounts suggest that the exchange of personal stories facilitated emotional connection, but also acted as a learning opportunity that helped situate experiences within systems-level power dynamics. In this sense, the stories constituted a means of developing a sense of connection within participant groups, but also as a way of framing their understanding of oppression. The story sharing between participants was therefore situated as a critical component of the program in facilitating the personal transformations and learning impacts of YouthMADE. Participants' experiences of sharing their stories were also considered to be a valuable opportunity to learn about and validate each others' experiences.

Overall, results provide support for storytelling as an effective tool in the process of building power for marginalized groups, forging connections between individuals, and identity construction (Bradley, 2005; Tavernier & Willoughby, 2012). The experience of empowerment and sense of community formed by exchange of personal stories is also consistent with research on the positive impacts of producing "counter-stories" for youth (Williams, Brent & O'Brien, 2003).

Long-term engagement: Impacts and sustaining factors

Participant accounts of long-term engagement in YouthMADE supported some beneficial outcome of meaningful youth engagement suggested in literature. The self-exploration afforded by the program experience also helped direct vocational decision-making, as demonstrated in Alex's self-acceptance and eventual transition into a career focused on Aboriginal issues (Rose-Krasnor, 2009; Taylor & Pancer, 2007). Participant accounts also demonstrated an enhanced sense of competence typically associated with

long-term youth engagement (Davidson, Manion, Davidson & Brandon, 2006), which was described to emerge from recognition of own competence as well as development of media and facilitation skills. However, participant accounts also describe the process of achieving competence as challenging, necessitating significant time, effort, and vulnerability. The challenges involved in reaching competence are exemplified by Cathy's feeling of failure after an unsuccessful workshop near the beginning of the Outreach phase. The emphasis on the immediacy of administrator support and development of coping strategies suggests that this sense of increased competence may not have been possible without continual self-reflection on the participants' part, and empathetic support from the program administrator.

In terms of Pancer, Rose-krasnor and Loiselle's model of sustained youth engagement (2002), participants described long-term engagement in YouthMADE to have been sustained by both individual-level factors and systems-level factors within the program. The systems-level sustaining factors within the YouthMADE program were closely aligned with three traits consistently found in systems that support participant growth and continued engagement, namely, caring relationships, communication of high expectations, and opportunities for contribution (Bernard, 1997). The mutual support, depth of connection between participants, and sense of belonging within YouthMADE as demonstrated in the theme of YouthMADE as a community suggested evidence of caring relationships fostered in the program experience. The connections from within the program were explicitly identified as a significant positive aspect of the program experience and provided motivation to continue. Evidence of high expectations was also conveyed through the intensity of the theoretical training and the autonomy granted to

participants in their work throughout their program experience. In addition to these three components, the sense of empowerment throughout their participation experiences was also identified as a sustaining factor of their involvement. Overall, participant-identified factors of the program experience facilitating long-term engagement corresponded to those identified in research, supporting validity of caring relationships, high expectations, and sense of contribution as significant factors in fostering sustained participation.

Additionally, participant responses also suggest the experience of empowerment from skill-development, peer support, and reflection to have been additional program-level factors in sustaining participation.

Systems-level sustaining factor of participation featured in participant accounts were mostly from within the program itself, with program peer, staff, and administrator supports being consistently identified as sustaining factors. However, long-term experiences in YouthMADE were not necessarily supported by systems outside of the program. Although encouragement toward YouthMADE participation from school or another youth engagement program were identified as initiating factors of participation for all three participants, systems-level factors outside of YouthMADE were generally not described as supportive in sustaining engagement. Participant accounts revealed that program engagement created a distance between participants and their existing contexts of interaction. This shift created a sense of distance and disconnection from existing social circles and school, which created a sense of separation rather than encouragement to continue participation. In Cathy's case, her family discouraged the intensity of her engagement in YouthMADE because of the heavy time investment required and the potential adverse effects on her academic work. Participants' engagement and investment

in program participation suggest that rewarding, long-term engagement in YouthMADE was possible without significant support for continued participation outside the program. Results suggest that the individual-level sustaining factors may have provided participants with sufficient motivation and investment for continuation in the program. Full and vital long-term engagement in YouthMADE in spite of opposition to continued participation also speak to participants' investment and commitment to the program.

Participants also reported experiences of feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of their participation experience and their role as facilitators. This sense of being overwhelmed is consistent with existing research on long-term participants of youth programs who transition to leadership roles in social justice education-based organizations (Klindera & Menderwekd, 2001; Rose-Krasnor, 2009). The YouthMADE participants also reported having been motivated by a sense of excitement and enthusiasm for "giving back" and contributing to the organization that had fostered their growth had motivated them to continue participation. This enthusiasm for contribution is also observed commonly among other long-term, high-commitment participants in youth engagement contexts (Pancer et al., 2007; Rose-Krasnor, 2009). The opportunity to contribute also facilitated a sense of reward about connecting with, and supporting future generations of social activists. Participants explicitly identified this sense of reward as a key factor of the YouthMADE experience in sustaining participation.

Challenges in engagement: Balancing the risks

Results from this study supported current research on possible challenges of social activism and story-sharing, and its toll on individuals who assume the role of sharing their minority experiences (Srivastava & Francis, 2006). Participant accounts showed that

vulnerability to external and internal critique, potential sense of failure, and an invalidation of experiences are ongoing risks involved with being social activists. Program experiences also rendered participants vulnerable to various risks, from social tension and distance from their friends and family, as well as professional risks assumed because of their commitment to a controversial perspective. Despite these challenges, the participants of this study reported a conscious decision to continue their involvement in, and commitment to YouthMADE, out of their personal drive to enact social justice, and also from their personal investment and gratitude toward YouthMADE. These factors can be considered individual-level factors in sustaining long-term participation.

Internal struggle, confusion, and dissonance also took place once participants developed a heightened awareness of oppression in their personal lives, as they were left with the choice to confront and address that oppression as a challenge, or to live with the vulnerability, or leave the context. Bo's description of being presented with this choice, but feeling obligated to continue activism in the absence of any other morally acceptable alternative, suggests that commitment to activism through the YouthMADE experience can also be considered a burden.

Although actively oppositional attitudes from participants' peers and possible imposition of negative stereotypes of social activists were predicted for long-term YouthMADE participants' experiences, none of the participants reported a sense of being stereotyped negatively. However, they did express a sense of isolation that accompanied their relatively greater understanding of oppression issues compared to their peers. The idea of balancing YouthMADE with other aspects of life, including peers, was a source of stress for participants. Consistent with research on highly engaged youth and activists,

long-term and enthusiastic participation in social activism through film required participants to be organized and assertive in making room for program participation in their lives (Bradley, 2005). Balance may also have been emphasized within this highly engaged group of participants because two participants were already involved in several organizations prior to YouthMADE participation, and one became highly engaged in various social activist contexts after participation in YouthMADE. It is also worth noting that Alex's account did not involve struggle with balance, but instead related devoting themselves more to this YouthMADE experience, and distancing themselves from their previous, existing circles. Their progression suggests that maintaining balance between aspects of participants' lives and immersive social activist experiences is not necessarily a feature of the YouthMADE participation experience.

Limitations and Strengths

The purpose of the study was to retrospectively explore long-term participation experiences in YouthMADE. The objective was to provide insight into three participants' experiences, and their personal meaning attributed to those experiences. The findings were limited to my ability as a researcher to interpret, analyze, and refract their accounts of the program experience. My particular lens of interpretation was colored with my bias toward perceiving the program as beneficial, positive, and overall meaningful in terms of personal development. To address this bias in my interpretation of the results, I provided participants with opportunity for correcting or elaborating on my interpretation of their accounts following the interviews. Participants suggested no changes to my interpretations, aside from an additional comment emphasizing the role of the program administrator that was included in analysis under the subtheme of support. I also

maintained a journal throughout my data collection and analysis process to remain self-aware.

A consideration for disseminating findings from this study is to ensure that the experiences crystallized in this study can be considered one way, or lens, through which to examine common meaning and experiences in this program. Although the method used in this study provides insight and understanding of the experiences, the descriptions of the program experience cannot be generalized to all such programs or such participants, and provides no standardized set of practice guidelines. It is also important to recognize that the significance of these results can only be considered in context of similar cultural and socioeconomic situations, as programs situated in vastly different circumstances may provide drastically different outcomes and experiences of their own.

The purposive, homogenous sampling employed in IPA guidelines in this context also limited the pool of potential participants, as participants needed to have experience in both phases of the program. Although the sampling is consistent with IPA guidelines and appropriate to the study, it also limited the likelihood of reflecting experiences of participants who had experienced one aspects of the program but did not remain involved with the program over long-term. By nature, all participants were long-term participants, and this study did not explore experience of participants who had discontinued participation after the Production phase. Of the five long-term participants in YouthMADE who had participated in both Production and Outreach phases of the program, two individuals declined to participate. The results therefore reflected perspectives of most, but not all long-term participants in YouthMADE.

Conversely, the strength of this study is in its depth of exploration and commitment to providing a full picture of the participation experience. The study allowed interpretation of participant accounts in providing a rich and nuanced sense of the long-term engagement experience in YouthMADE. Additionally, the retrospective nature of the exploration allowed for participants to gain perspective and contextualize their experience of the program within the greater fabric of their lives, which is a rare opportunity. The findings of the study were continually grounded in the participants' perspectives and involved immersive, iterative analysis of the interview transcripts.

This study is also valuable for its academic exploration of youth media program experiences in a Canadian context, as most studies in this area are based in the United States (Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010). Despite the similarity between the two North American cultures, youth media programs in the Canadian context merits separate examination, particularly given the social activism typically involved in youth media programs. The two nations' approach toward multiculturalism and social and cultural equality function under distinctly different models, often contrasted metaphorically as a 'melting pot' vs. a 'cultural mosaic' (Alera, 2011; Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994). Canada's unique immigration history and system, and the juxtaposition of its self-perceived reputation of tolerance toward individual and cultural differences (Alera, 2011) in contrast to systemic inequalities in Canadian society provides a landscape for social activism that is distinct from United States. This contrast was exemplified by Cathy's description of her struggle with the Canadian immigration system and the challenges it presents for her parents, and the societal pressure to be grateful for being in Canada.

Directions for Future Research

Study findings fleshed out the significance of impact that participants gain from long-term engagement in YouthMADE. The challenges and risks involved in taking on this participation experience suggests need for further research using varied methodologies to explore various aspects of the program experience in detail for continually enhancing our understanding of youth media programs. In particular, this study focused on the experience of long-term participants who had gleaned significance, meaning, and personal transformation through their participation but excluded participants joined the program only for the Outreach phase. As much of the sense of community, and commitment to “giving back” to the program occurred during or as a result of the Production phase, the workshop facilitators who were not involved in the Production phase may likely conceptualize their YouthMADE experience differently. Other areas of research that may enhance our understanding of youth media programs may be to delve into experiences of workshop participants, who are involved with the program on a different level. Attitudes, learning, and skills developed through the participation experience may likely differ based on the level of commitment and duration of involvement in the program.

The results of the study also presented necessity for longitudinal research on youth media program participants to determine long-term influence of participation in adulthood. A longitudinal design may, for example, illuminate whether skills and attitudes gained from the YouthMADE participation experience persist or manifest themselves in adulthood following the conclusion of their participation experience.

Implications for Practice

This study explored the lived experiences of a youth media program from long-term participants' perspective. Existing studies examining youth media programs approach the experience of participation using a quantitative approach, or through observation and questionnaire data. The participant perspectives examined in detail within this study suggest a number of implications for the practice of youth media programs.

The emphasis placed on the sense of community within the program as a factor for sustaining participation, enabling self-acceptance, and supporting participants through challenging experiences suggest that this cohesion between program participants is a central factor of long-term youth media program involvement. This sense of community referred not only to participants, but also to the sense of support and belonging with program mentors and program administrators. In particular, support from program administrators was described as helpful in reducing feelings of guilt or sense of failure from negative or challenging experiences within the program.

In light of the stress and vulnerability that accompany participants' sense of reward in their acts of social activism, results highlight the necessity for program administrators and mentors of youth media programs to incorporate support and means of connection throughout various stages in the program. Creation of a psychologically safe, nurturing, and empowering environment within the program while maintaining participant autonomy may help sustain engagement and draw out effective learning, introspection, and connection between program peers. Preparing to support participants through the potential experiences of disappointment, dissatisfaction, or sense of being overwhelmed by what we now know to have been an intense experience overall may be necessary for youth

media program mentors and administrators. The understanding of stress and challenges involved in participation experiences also serve to highlight the necessity of sufficient training, support, and systems of self-care for program staff and administrators, who often serve as front-line source of support for participants of youth programs (Klindera & Menderwekd, 2001). Understanding, commitment, and connection with the participant on the program administrators' part during the controversy with Bo's film, for example, was identified as a significant source of empowerment and also as a motivating factor to continue disseminating his film. In contrast, a program administrator with underdeveloped understanding or lack of connection with participant experiences in such a situation may have been an additional source of stress for the participant. Results imply that empowerment and support through a sense of community, as well as administrator involvement in its creation, should be emphasized in practice to support well-being and fostering long-term engagement in activism.

Participants' identification of CRT-based knowledge from the YouthMADE experience as a significant contributor to their personal transformation and to the overall meaning of the participation experience suggests that the integration of social justice education within the youth media program enhanced the overall impact of the experience and its personal significance to participants. Although guidelines for best practices for youth media programs are not practical given their variety in objectives and implementation styles (Campbell, Hoey & Perlman, 2001), the effective integration of these program components in enhancing participation impacts suggest that the incorporation of social justice education, and particularly ideas of CRT, may be beneficial for programs seeking to foster introspection, self-acceptance, and motivation toward social change.

Although discussions and teachings on CRT with children and adolescents are not uncommon within social justice education and social responsibility programs, some tenets of CRT remain controversial. Teaching aspects of CRT in public schools have incited panic among parents in some communities for fear of potential vilification of students from privileged (i.e., Caucasian) backgrounds, and the potential of fostering oppositional attitudes between demographic groups (Starnes, 2013). Canadian educators and community members have also accused social justice education in general, and CRT in particular, of ‘brainwashing’ youth into an exclusively liberal mindset and erasing individual differences in opinions and backgrounds (Bialystok, 2014; Lau, 2012). Participant accounts in this study demonstrated no antagonism in action or attitude toward any demographic group, including groups traditionally considered as “oppressors” (i.e., Caucasian, high SES). Participant descriptions of anti-oppression conceptualized privilege and oppression as fluid and multi-dimensional within and outside of the self. Results convey a multiplicity of perspectives fostered from CRT training, and an overall greater sense of emphasis on being open to others’ experiences and perspectives, suggesting that learning about CRT is not necessarily prescriptive of a rigid and binary mindset, as feared by some educators and parents.

Finally, youth media programs can be considered a challenging but potentially rewarding and empowering experience and opportunity to foster full youth engagement – participant accounts of YouthMADE experiences suggest potential for immersive involvement in terms of behavior, affect, and cognitive engagement. Although not all participants may experience impacts from the program in a way similar to participants

interviewed in this study, results show that it is possible for some people to develop long and meaningful engagement within contexts of a youth media program.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The rich picture of long-term YouthMADE participation experiences offered in this study adds color to our current understanding of youth media program experiences and youth engagement. As literature on youth engagement and youth media suggests, participation in youth media programs presented opportunity for full youth engagement, requiring personal investment and introspection, in addition to the act of film creation and workshop facilitation required for participation.

A core feature of the YouthMADE participation experience was transformation, with change directed inward as well as outward. Transformation and personal meaning was not uniformly attributed to a single aspect or phase of the program participation experience. Rather, transformation occurred as an iterative process throughout the program experience, with empowerment giving rise to acceptance, introspection, and activism, which were then further sustained and supported by belonging and empowerment of the YouthMADE community. Participants' transformation within the self involved self-acceptance as well as constant self-questioning, leading to an overall deeper understanding of oneself, openness to change and self-reflection. Participants also underwent a change in how they perceive and interact with their world. This transformation of the self was in itself also enabled and motivated participants to cause change in their communities and society as a whole through film creation and dissemination.

The process of transformation was challenging as well as rewarding and empowering, requiring support and empowerment from the program members for sustenance. Although it not likely that all participants experienced impacts from the program in a way similar to participants interviewed in this study, results show that long-

term engagement within a youth media program can hold significant meaning for participants and act as catalysts for identity development and activism. The challenges and personal vulnerability involved in participation also suggests necessity for continued support and connection within the program. In this regard, empowerment and support within the program can be considered critical elements and may merit emphasis on future practice and research. In this sense, youths' participation in youth media programs should also be viewed as a commitment and contribution with vulnerabilities assumed on part of the participants, and not as a mere means of training, or skill-building.

Transformation from the program participation experience translated to experiences outside the program as well. The transformation within participant identities and perspectives manifested into openness to alternate perspectives as well as ability to label, reject, and counter discourses and actions of oppression in participants' personal and professional contexts. The transformation also facilitated separation and distance from existing circles of belonging, and a critical, jaded perspective of the world, again suggesting challenges and losses that accompany benefits and enrichment gained from the program participation experience.

Results highlighted importance of program administrator engagement and support in creating long-term and psychologically safe youth program experiences. Integration of Critical Race Theory-based social justice education generally enriched the participation experience and engagement with media without indoctrinating oppositional attitudes or prescriptive thinking. Although continued exploration of participant experiences across different levels of engagement would further expand our current understanding of program impacts, this study suggests possible directions in how participation experience in

youth media programs manifest itself on long-term participants' lives and experiences.

Enriched understanding of participant experiences and its translation to program impacts may help build capacity for youth media programs and guide practices for supporting participation experiences.

References

- Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the model of multiple dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(1), 1-22.
- Alera, J (2011). From mosaic to multiversality: Repriming multicultural governance in a postnational Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 43*(1), 17-39.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55*, 469–480.
- Applebaum, B. (2005). In the name of morality: moral responsibility, whiteness and social justice education. *Journal of Moral Education, 34*(3), 277-290.
- Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G. E., & Sue, D. W. E. (1998). *Counseling American Minorities*. McGraw-Hill.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology, 3*(3), 265-299.
- Bashir, N. Y., Lockwood, P., Chasteen, A. L., Nadolny, D., & Noyes, I. (2013). The ironic impact of activists: Negative stereotypes reduce social change influence. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 43*(7), 614-626.
- Bartko, W., & Eccles, J. (2003). Adolescent participation in structured and unstructured activities: a person-oriented analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 32*(4), 233-241.
- Biggerstaff, D. L. & Thompson, A. R. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A qualitative methodology of choice in healthcare research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 5*, 173 – 183.

- Bradley, B. (2005). *Psychology and Experience*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Brocki, J. M., & Wearden, A. J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and health, 21*(1), 87-108.
- Brown, J. D., Halpern, C., & L'Engle, K. (2005). Mass media as a sexual super peer for early maturing girls. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 36*(5), 420-427.
doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2004.06.003
- Browne, K. & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. (2005). The influence of violent media on children and adolescents—a public health approach. *Lancet, 365*, 702-710.
- Campbell, P. Hoey, L., & Perlman, L. (2001). Sticking with my dreams: Defining and redefining youth media in the 21st Century. Groton, MA: Campbell Kibler. Retrieved December 15, 2012 from http://www.campbell-kibler.com/youth_media.pdf.
- Chapin, J. (2000). Adolescent sex and mass media: A developmental approach. *Adolescence, 35*(140), 799-811.
- Chapman, E. & Smith, J. (2002). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the new genetics. *Journal of Health Psychology, 7*(2): 125–130.
- Charmaraman, L. (2010). The importance of audience and agency for representation: A case study of an urban youth media community. *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth, 13*, 205-231.
- Charmaraman, L., & Grossman, J. M. (2010). Importance of race and ethnicity: an exploration of Asian, Black, Latino, and multiracial adolescent identity. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16*(2), 144.

- Chau, C. (2010). YouTube as a participatory culture. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 65-74.
- Chen, H., & Rossi, P. H. (1983). Evaluating with sense: The theory-driven approach. *Evaluation Review*, 7, 283-302.
- Davidson, M., Manion, I., Davidson, S., & Brandon, S. (2006). For youth by youth: Innovative mental health promotion at Youth Net/Réseau Ado. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 1(3), 269-273.
- Deaux, K. (1993). Reconstructing social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 4-12.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 7-27.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Farooqui, S., & Terpstra, A. (2014, April). Life After Youth Media: Insights about Program Influence into Adulthood. Chicago: Social IMPACT Research Center.
- Fouts, G., & Inch, R. (2005). Homosexuality in TV situation comedies: Characters and verbal comments. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 49(1), 35-45.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172-199.
- Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New directions for youth development*, 2002(96), 27-46.
- Gonzales, R., Glik, M., Davoudi, A. & Ang, A. (2004). Media literacy and public health: Integrating theory, research, and practice for tobacco control. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48 (2), 189-201.

- Hobbs, R., & Yoon, J. (2008). Creating empowering environments in youth media organizations. *Youth Media Reporter*, 2(16), 149-164.
- Holden, D. J., Messeri, P., Evans, W. D., Crankshaw, E., & Ben-Davies, M. (2004). Conceptualizing youth empowerment within tobacco control. *Health Education & Behavior*, 31(5), 548-563.
- Hull, G. A. & Greeno, J. G. (2006). Youth culture and Digital Media: New Literacies for New Times. *Research In The Teaching Of English*, 38(2), 229-233.
- Hull, G. A., & Katz, M. L. (2006). Crafting an agentive self: Case studies of digital storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 43-81.
- Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(4), 405-414.
- Kaiser Family Foundation. (2002). Teens say sex on TV influences behavior of peers [press release]. Menlo Park (CA): Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://www.ponline.org/node/253992>.
- Kincade, S., & Macy, C. (2003). *What works in youth media: case studies from around the world*. Baltimore: International Youth Foundation.
- Klein, H., & Shiffman, K. (2009). Underrepresentation and symbolic annihilation of socially disenfranchised groups ('out groups') in animated cartoons. *Howard Journal Of Communications*, 20(1), 55-72.
- Klindera, K., & Menderweld, J. (2001). Youth involvement in prevention programming. Retrieved September 30, 2014 from: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/involvement.pdf>

- Koch, T. (2006). Establishing rigour in qualitative research: the decision trail. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(1), 91-100.
- Kudanis, Rose M. (2003) *Children, Teens, Families and Mass Media*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53.
- Kunkel, D., Eyal, K., Finnerty, K., Biely, E., & Donnerstein, E. (2005). *Sex on TV*. Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved May 1, 2013 from <http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/sex-on-tv-4-full-report.pdf>.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (2006). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*, 11-30.
- Lapadat, J. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(1), 64.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research In Psychology*, 3(2), 102-120.
- Lipsey, M. W. (1993). Theory as method: Small theories of treatments. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 5-38.
- Mansfield, E., & Kehoe, J. (1994). A critical examination of anti-racist education. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'education*, 418-430.
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3, 551-558.
- Mastro, D.E., & Stern, S.R. (2003). Representations of race in television commercials: A

- content analysis of prime-time advertising. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47 (4), 638-647.
- McCabe, J., Fairchild, E., Grauerholz, L., Pescosolido, B. A., & Tope, D. (2011). Gender in twentieth-century children's books: Patterns of disparity in titles and central characters. *Gender & Society*, 25(2), 197-226. doi:10.1177/0891243211398358
- Media Awareness Network. (2005). Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase II: Trends and Recommendations. Prepared by Environics Research Group. Retrieved March 12, 2013 from <http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/publication-report/full/YCWWII-trends-recomm.pdf>
- Menten, A. (2009). Youth Voice in an Age of Globalization: How Youth Media Programs Can Prepare Young People for an Interconnected World. *Youth Media Reporter*, 382-85.
- Murrell, P. (2006). Toward social justice in urban education: A model of collaborative cultural inquiry in urban schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39(1), 81-90.
- Pancer, S. M., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Loiselle, L. D. (2002). Youth conferences as a context for engagement. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2002(96), 47-64.
- Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M., Hunsberger, B., & Alisat, S. (2007). Community and political involvement in adolescence: What distinguishes the activists from the uninvolved? *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6), 741-759.
- Pietkiewicz, I. & Smith, J.A. (2014). Praktyczny przewodnik interpretacyjnej analizy fenomenologicznej w badaniach jakościowych w psychologii (I. Pietkiewicz, Trans.). *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, 18(2), 361-369.
- Podkalicka, A., & Campbell, C. (2010). Understanding digital storytelling: individual 'voice' and community-building in youth media programs. *Seminar.Net: Media, Technology*

- & *Life-Long Learning*, 6(2), 1-10.
- Psychological Effects of Symbolic Annihilation. (2011). *Conference Papers -- International Communication Association*, 1-15.
- Rainie, L. (2010). Internet, broadband, and cell phone statistics. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, 5.
- Reynolds, A. L., & Pope, R. L. (1991). The complexities of diversity: Exploring multiple oppressions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, 174 – 180.
- Rodriquez, A. (1999). Making Latino news: race, language, and class. *Aztlán*, 24(2), 15-47.
- Rose-Krasnor, L. (2009). Future directions in youth involvement research. *Social Development*, 18(2), 497-509.
- Sandhu, A., Ives, J., Birchwood, M., & Upprove, R. (2013). The subjective experience and phenomenology of depression following first episode psychosis: A qualitative study using photo-elicitation. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 4(1), 56-99.
- Schar, E., Gutierrez, K., Murphy-Hoefer, R., & Nelson, D.E. (2006). *Tobacco Use Prevention Media Campaigns: Lessons Learned from Youth in Nine Countries*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Small, S., & Memmo, M. (2004). Contemporary models of youth development and problem prevention: Toward an integration of terms, concepts, and models. *Family Relations*, 53, 3-11.

- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, methods, and research*. London: Sage.
- Smith, J. A. & Osborn, M. (2008). The fearfulness of chronic pain and the centrality of the therapeutic relationship in containing it: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 5(4), 276-288.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.
- Spencer, I. (2013). Doing the 'Second Shift': gendered labour and the symbolic annihilation of teacher educators' work. *Journal Of Education For Teaching*, 39(3), 301-313.
- Srivastava, S., & Francis, M. (2006). The problem of authentic experience: Storytelling in anti-racist and anti-homophobic education. *Critical Sociology*, 32(2-3), 275-307.
- Starnes, T. (2013). Public School Teaches "White Privilege" Class. *Fox News*. Retrieved September 30, 2014 from <http://radio.foxnews.com/toddstarnes/top-stories/public-school-teaches-white-privilege-class.html>
- Strange, J. (2007). Media portrayals of adolescents. In *Encyclopedia of children, adolescents, and the media*. (pp. 6-12). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi:
- Strasburger, V. C. (2009). Children and TV advertising: Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 22(3), 185-187.
- Taylor, T. P., & Pancer, M. S. (2007). Community service experiences and commitment to volunteering. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37(2), 320-345.
- Van Evra, J. (2004). *Television and Child Development*. Routledge.
- Wade, T. D., Davidson, S., & O'Dea, J. A. (2003). A preliminary controlled evaluation of a

school-based media literacy program and self-esteem program for reducing eating disorder risk factors. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 33, 371–383.

Yardley, L. (2007). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology. A practical guide to research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

“Focused Life History”

Participant experiences with the Production Phase of YouthMADE

Application essay provided to participants

1. Could you describe yourself at this point in time (the time of application submission for YouthMADE)? What were your experiences like as a 15/16-year-old student?
2. How did your experiences influence your desire to participate?
3. Can you describe the Production Phase in your own words? (e.g., one memory that stands out)

“The Details of Experience”

Participant experience with Outreach phase of YouthMADE

1. After your involvement with the YouthMADE filmmaking, how would you describe yourself at the time when you were considering continuing?
2. What made you continue into the Outreach phase of the program?
3. Could you describe your time in the Education in your own words? (e.g., one memory that stands out)

“Reflection on the Meaning”

Participant current selves

1. How would you describe yourself as a person at this present point in time? (e.g., your defining characteristics, feelings, states, motivations)
2. What would you describe as the defining moment of your YouthMADE experience?
3. Has the YouthMADE experience made a difference to how you see yourself?
4. If you could assign a symbol to the role that this experience has played in your life, what would you say? (e.g., what word, image, or metaphor would you associate with this experience?)
 - a. Alternative: “My YouthMADE experience was.....?”

Appendix B: Consent Form



a place of mind

**Department of Educational and Counselling
Psychology, and Special Education**

The University of British Columbia

Faculty of Education

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver BC Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel 604-822-0242 Fax 604-822-3302

Experiences of a media program: A phenomenological description by highly-engaged participants

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jenna Shapka, Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education, University of British Columbia. Phone: -- Email: [--](#)

Co-Investigator: Leigh Mijin Yang, Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education, University of British Columbia.
Phone: -- Email: [--](#)

Purpose: Current research on youth media programs suggests both positive and negative impacts of participation in such programs. However, qualitative descriptions of experiences from participants are necessary to flesh out the lived experience of participation and its meaning. The goal of this research is to understand more about the YouthMADE participation experiences, and its impact on the participants' lives.

Participants: Everyone who has participated in both Production (film-making) and Education (workshop) phases of YouthMADE has been invited to participate.

Your Rights: You are under no obligation to take part in the study. Even after agreeing to participate, you are free to change your mind at any time with no consequences. Your decision to participate or not participate is voluntary and will not affect your present or future involvement with YouthMADE.

Procedures: Your participation will consist of an approximately hour-long interview where you will be asked about your experience of YouthMADE as a participant, and its influence on your life. With your permission, the interview will be video-recorded and transcribed to accurately record your thoughts. If you would prefer not to be videorecorded, audiorecordings or written notes alone will be used.

Potential Benefits and Risks: Although you will receive no explicit benefits of participation in the study, the interview will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on

and share your thoughts regarding the experience of participation in YouthMADE in a non-judgmental setting. No known risks are associated with participation in this study. You are free during the interview to refrain from answering any questions or to stop participation as you see fit. Although the interview does not contain questions specifically targeting sensitive topics, the researcher can refer you to a counselor or other community resources for dealing with any feelings raised from the interview necessitating support.

Confidentiality: All hard copies of documents and recordings will be identified only by an assigned code name (e.g., “Participant A”) and kept in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator’s office. Electronic files will be kept on hard drives of password-protected computers on UBC campus. Any references to names of people and locations will be deleted or changed to protect the confidentiality of the interview data. You will not be identified by your own name in the interview transcripts or in the completed study.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions about this study, please contact -- at ----, or her research associate, -- at --.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at --.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, meaning that you have a choice. You may refuse to participate, or choose to withdraw from the study at any time and it will not affect your current or future involvement with YouthMADE in any way.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Name: _____ (Please Print Clearly)
Signature: _____

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Dear long-time YouthMADE participants,

For many of you, this past year marked the 6th-year anniversary of your involvement with YouthMADE. As someone whose perspectives have been greatly influenced by the YouthMADE films and workshops, thank you for the products of your creativity and activism from that summer in 2007 and beyond. Some of you have met me during your workshops or in informal settings and may remember me: I am a graduate student at UBC, currently pursuing a school psychology degree. My interest in the YouthMADE program has found its way to my Master's thesis project, in which I hope to explore the lived experiences of YouthMADE. I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project regarding your experience of participation in YouthMADE.

I hope to interview 3 to 5 people who had participated in both the Production stage (filmmaking) and the Education stage (workshop facilitation) about their experiences with the program. The interview process would involve one interview of about an hour in length. The purpose of the interview is to simply talk about your experience and how it colored your life. You are welcome to share both positive and negative experiences and impressions of your program participation. What you share during the interviews will be kept confidential, and will have no bearing on any involvement with YouthMADE that you wish to continue. I hope to schedule some interviews within the next few weeks, but will be open to holding interviews at any time in January and February of 2014.

If you are interested in being interviewed about your ideas and experiences regarding YouthMADE, please let me know whenever you can.

Thank you and hope to see you soon,

Leigh Yang

--

Appendix D: Superordinate Themes and Sub-themes

Table 2. Retrospectively constructed experiences of a youth media program for long-term participants: Superordinate themes and sub-themes

I. YouthMADE experience as avenue for self-exploration

- A. Empowerment
- B. Self-questioning
- C. Self-acceptance

II. YouthMADE experience as opportunity for learning

- A. Knowledge and skill acquisition
- B. Contextualizing experiences
- C. Learning to cope

III. YouthMADE as platform for affecting change

- A. Self-expression
- B. Empowering others
- C. Challenging others' perspectives

IV. YouthMADE experience as a challenge

- A. Stress
- B. Vulnerability
- C. Risks
- D. "Pain of being aware"
- E. Balance with other aspects of life

V. YouthMADE as a community

- A. Sense of belonging
- B. Safe place
- C. Mutual support
- D. Separation from other communities