Using an Ethnonarrative Design within Arts-Based Community Research:

SKETCH Toronto and its Ongoing Social Impact

by

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The above committee determined that the thesis is acceptable in form and content and that a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate during an oral examination. A signed copy of the Certificate of Approval is available from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the experiences of youth and their interaction with the Toronto arts organization "SKETCH Working Arts" using an ethnonarrative design to examine levels of impact through the organization. Drawing on ethnographic research utilizing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, the data offers a narrative and descriptive understanding of the role the arts play in youths' lives with respect to personal and social development. It qualifies their interactions in the areas of career, education, and community connections. This research will: 1) present a guide that qualifies types of marginalized youth that access community services, suggesting that other organizations utilize this guide to better serve youth populations, 2) demonstrate how ethnonarrative can serve as an ideal methodological framework for research in community settings that serve marginalized populations. This research contributes to the growing scholarship on arts-based research and the pursuit of social change in the lives of marginalized youth.

Keywords: ethnonarrative; arts-based research; marginalized youth; arts; community-based research

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis consists of original work of which I have authored. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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                                                              Amber Vibert

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The research described in this thesis was performed at SKETCH Working Arts in Toronto, Ontario, in the community cultural hub Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto's West Queen West neighbourhood. This shared community space hosts the administrative offices, kitchen, and studio space of SKETCH. Sonya Reynolds, Program Associate, was the point of contact for this research. She granted access to the space and became the co-investigator for this project. I was responsible for constructing the interview and focus group guides used within the data collection process. The co-investigator contributed to this process by editing and approving the interview and focus group guides. She encouraged SKETCH attendees to be participants in the research and provided access to communicate with participants. I was also responsible for completing the duties of a placement student in the studio space twice a week during the spring programming session. I facilitated the interviews and follow-up interviews, while the co-investigator co-facilitated the focus groups. I completed the analysis and presentation of information within this thesis as a result of the data collection process.

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

PA   Program Associate

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Community organizations are an integral part of accessible public support for youth and young adults. Community organizations offer a range of supports such as counselling, free programming in sports, the arts, education, and more; they also offer a number of community engagement initiatives. For many families and individuals, public programming, community groups, and organizations are critical to daily function and well-being. Arts programs that offer visual art, dramatic arts/theatre, dance, music or any variation or combination of these things have specific implications for the groups that engage in them. Both community-based research and research within institutional settings suggest that there is an array of positive outcomes associated with engagement in arts programming, particularly among marginalized populations. This paper explores the implications of the arts-based programming offered at "SKETCH Working Arts" in Toronto, Ontario, and the organizational impact it has on marginalized and homeless youth that access its services.

The methodological design used in this setting is also a key contribution to the outcomes in this study. Qualitative researchers often use community platforms to gather a refined look at the outcomes and possibilities of the use of arts and similar activities to support marginalized individuals (see, for example Kidd, 2009; Foster & Spencer, 2013; Fulford & Thompson, 2013; Minh, Patel, Bruce-Barrett, & O'Campo, 2015). In particular, qualitative researchers often use a combination of qualitative methods, or mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve a desired outcome. Interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and any variation of these are

commonly used in community arts research, including arts-based methods of data collection. A review of literature explores how arts-based methods are classified and can be incorporated into research. The review also identifies a number of studies that investigate the use and impact of arts used in community, organizational, and institutional settings, and primarily those which focus on youth. The variety of research in this area has both benefits and challenges, and its difference is based upon a number of factors such as settings, outcomes, or questions being addressed. Additional, focused research in this area is required, particularly assessing outcomes for marginalized young people.

The current study was conducted in collaboration with a community arts organization/initiative in Downtown Toronto, Ontario. The organization, SKETCH Working Arts, is the featured organization. Research was completed using a series of qualitative methods to assess the ongoing impact of the organization and the experiences of the young adults that attend the organization's programs. Ethnonarrative is a combination of ethnographic and narrative building methods and was employed as the methodological guide for data collection. Secondary to determining the impact of arts-based programming, this paper suggests how and why ethnonarrative is ideal for research within community settings like SKETCH. Previous studies have used a similar combination of methods to assess programming in community settings, but none have employed an ethnonarrative design, particularly with marginalized populations. This research design also served as a type of program evaluation. Due to the collaboration with SKETCH administration, and with participant consent, the data collected provided results for program evaluation done by the organization (not reported here), along with the ethnonarrative content for this study. Over the course of six months, after secondary

research and preliminary planning, the study was designed and implemented through a series of interviews, follow-up interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

The results provided insight into why and how the arts are important for personal growth, career development, community engagement, and even as a form of deterrence from negative life events or choices. From arts programming alone, young people benefitted, but the addition of resources and supports through the organization were imperative to the positive outcomes seen through this study. The use of ethnonarrative methods in the research design created a deeper understanding of the organizational mandate and internal functions that subsequently influence programming and resources. Funding for the arts in organizations and schools has had numerous cuts to make way for other programs or priorities (Jenkins, 2009). This research provides empirical support for the continued funding of public arts programming and all supports crucial to wellbeing and the development of personal attributes, abilities, and transferrable skills.

1.1 Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the use of ethnographic and narrative methods as both epistemology and methodology for studying the interaction that marginalized individuals have with the community arts organization "SKETCH". More specifically, I employ and examine the use of ethnonarrative research as an approach to the study of arts-based community programming at SKETCH. Ethnonarrative not only allows youth to have a voice to illustrate their personal experiences and express how varying arts-based activities have impacted their lives, but for the researcher to be further enriched in the research environment.

Through the use of ethnonarrative as a research method, I aim to gauge what role arts programs play in young people's lives with respect to personal and social development, along with the interaction between relevant social institutions. Social institutions refer to the areas of family, education, careers, and any other social institutions through which young people interact. This is the primary goal of the content of the data collected. Thus, this thesis examines the question: What role does community arts programming play in the lives of the young people that attend SKETCH and the social institutions with which they interact?

Following a review of literature, I describe the methodological design for this study, and my concerns and experiences with accessing the organization. After establishing and explaining how I collaborate with the organization to employ each method of data collection, I present the results produced from the process and suggest why ethnonarrative is a valuable methodological approach for community-based research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Service Models for Homeless and Marginalized Youth

The importance of active engagement within the study of marginalized youth is twofold. Not only are youth future policy influencers/makers, entrepreneurs, social capital, innovators, and voice of our constantly changing society, but they are a population that is faced with ever-growing intrinsic disadvantages rooted in poverty, stigma, and mental health issues (Kidd, 2003; Perron, 2014). Active engagement is often discussed as a goal of services or programming offered for youth. For instance, service providers want to encourage youth to actively engage in their communities and with services offered, and staff want to reciprocate that level of engagement from a service standpoint. Services for homeless and marginalized youth frequently address basic human needs, but in other instances, also promote engagement at the community and interpersonal levels. The failure of other systems of care for children and youth in the formative years of life can be considered a main reason why services such as the ones discussed here thrive (Gaetz, 2014). Formal systems of care include child protection, health (including mental health) care, and corrections. With regards to child protection, youth are no longer supported beyond the age of 18 (Gaetz, 2014). The service response to the marginalization effects of "aging out" of the system and other experiences of disadvantage that youth face, such as racialization, poverty, poor mental health, and shifting employment values, is demonstrated in this section by services offered by private and publicly funded organizations, initiatives, studies, and community centres.

Gaetz (2014) suggests there are three approaches to tackling homelessness, which include prevention, emergency response, and accommodation and supports (Gaetz, 2014). The organization, SKETCH, takes all three of these approaches in the form of providing supports to prevent homelessness, emergency response in the form of free meals, safe space, and referrals out for support, and internal supports via mentors, training, and income generating opportunities. The Children's Aid Society of Toronto and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2010) define homelessness and the risk of homelessness as:

> Having no permanent, safe, affordable, and adequate home. This may include staying outside, staying in a shelter or transitional housing, 'couch-surfing' or staying temporarily at a friend or family's home, or accessing services for homeless youth. 'Risk of homelessness' also involves paying more than half of one's gross income on rent (p. 5).

SKETCH addresses homelessness and marginalization in many ways, and the hybrid nature of services within this organization will be discussed later on, but more straightforward service models will be outlined below.

The subgroup of homeless and marginalized young people is the fastest growing group of homeless individuals and those at-risk of becoming homeless (Gaetz, Tarasuk, Dachner, & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Children's Aid Society of Toronto et al., 2010). Services designed to address the needs of this subgroup take into consideration things such as shelter, food, personal hygiene, and health care. These services come largely from service agencies, health centres, and voluntary organizations (Gaetz et al., 2006). Some examples

include soup kitchens which offer meals and snacks at a set location, or through a mobile dispensing option, hostels, housing services, or temporary shelters (such as the Out of the Cold programs in Toronto), and health and social service agencies geared towards expanded provisions offered for youth participating in their services and programs (Gaetz et al., 2006). Religious organizations, addictions programs, and Frist Nations/Inuit/Metis organizations are also included (Gaetz, O'Grady, Buccieri, Karabanow, & Marsolais, 2013). Youth in this population have often had contact with the Children's Aid Society, and with the growing immigrant population in Toronto, youth also access education, language, and employment services (Children's Aid Society of Toronto et al., 2010). Some programs, aside from simply providing the services and supports necessary to survive, target skills and knowledge acquisition that youth can benefit from in order to thrive and gain momentum in the management of their own lives. Examples of these types of programs include agricultural or gardening programs which teach youth a range of skills while also increasing food security (Fulford & Thompson, 2013), and arts or skills-based programs that allow youth to practice talents that can be applied to real-world scenarios including income generating opportunities.

After-school programs and drop-in centers provide services for homeless and other youths in need (Shepard & Booth, 2009; Pedersen, Tucker, & Kovalchik, 2016). Basic needs, and more specific needs such as those that are health and substance related, can be supported through these programs. Some offer a range of activities from sports to crafts, while others may focus largely on artistic activities. Heart to Heart Art, for example, is an after-school program provided by the YWCA in collaboration with students and faculty at a university in Washington. Children and youth with low

academic attainment due to unstable life experiences are offered an outlet to build

relationships with others, learn new skills, focus their energies on the creation of

something positive, and share their work with the community (Shepard & Booth, 2009).

Not only are there services and skill-based resources available, but numerous initiatives

(such as those outlined by Blanchet-Cohen & Cook, 2014; Cannuscio, Dupuis, Graves,

Hanson, & Hersh, 2015, and Yoshitaka, 2014) have emerged which provide opportunities

for young people over a pre-determined period of time, such as several months or years.

These are typically funded by the government or larger community organizations that

have garnered funding to support these initiatives. More of these initiatives will be

outlined in the following sections, but an example of a short-term (not permanent) service

and research model which addresses the needs of marginalized populations was

introduced in 2008 and is known as the Creative Institute for Toronto's Young (CITY)

Leaders, provided by United Way Toronto (UWT) (Shera & Murray, 2016). The program

took place over the course of four years, and a total of 149 youth engaged in participatory

educational workshops, learning projects, mentorships, and other leadership development

opportunities in cohort groups every 8 months. This is just one unique service delivery

format that Toronto has offered.

     2.1.1 Policy implications and barriers to accessing services. Toronto, and

specifically the downtown core, is divided by socioeconomic status, with poverty

concentrated in certain pockets throughout the city. There are a number of community

organizations and services that aim to address poverty in the greater Toronto area, but

like any social service, the combined efforts of these organizations are not enough to help

overcome the socioeconomic challenges that Torontonian's face. Kamizaki et al. (2013)

suggest that in order to address the systemic inequalities facing residents, these local efforts must be combined with public policy change initiatives. Similar community-based studies are instrumental in influencing public policy. There are a number of community-based services for youth considered at-risk or homeless, but Kamizaki et al. (2013) claim there are a number of challenges that these organizations face on the journey to influence policy. These challenges are primarily funding constraints based on financial and legal frameworks, along with the complexity of public policy development and language which deters organizations from participating in policy formation. Geographical challenges and unequal power relations are also constraining factors (Kamizaki et al., 2013). Beyond these policy-driven challenges, agencies are also concerned with informing marginalized populations about their services and drawing them in. In order to take the action necessary to provide services, agencies perform a range of outreach activities in order to locate difficult to find groups of youth (Connolly & Joly, 2012). Outreach for this purpose is necessary, but limitations exist despite concerted efforts.

Gaetz et al. (2006) examine the impact of policy directives on homeless youth in Toronto with regards to food access. Through interviews, they account for the lived experiences of current policy directions that have targeted youth. They find that the well-being and nutritional needs of homeless youth are primarily being "managed" by local efforts to provide food programs and services, but this management strategy has tabled efforts at the national level to reduce poverty and prevent homelessness. This method of managing the needs of homeless populations is ideal for short-term solutions to food insecurity, but offers no concrete long-term solutions to the issue of eradicating homelessness. Alternatively, Fulford and Thompson (2013) analyze whether a program

that teaches gardening and contributing to the community can provide lasting impacts on youth development. They argue that by means of a shift in power dynamics, youth can take a more active role in contributing to their communities, which in turn can have positive outcomes for both their lives and social interactions. There have been many documented benefits of youth gardening programs, including that of Fulford and Thompson (2013), who found that participants of the Youth for EcoAction (YEA) program run out of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg had marked positive effects, such as increased skill building and job training, self-esteem, nutrition and food security, environmental awareness and behaviour, community building of green spaces, gardening infrastructure, and community food security. Based on these findings, there is clearly support and a demand for these types of programs, but barriers to access still remain, such as lack of awareness of services available to them and getting to and from service locations.

2.2 Community Engagement Initiatives

In addition to the service models identified in the previous section, there are a number of community based initiatives targeted for young people. Community engagement initiatives can be considered a type of service model themselves, but differ in that they may not be associated with any distinct or permanent location with ongoing funding or support. Historically, literature has addressed homelessness and marginalization as a social problem that can be observed through a deficit model. Through this model, youth are studied in terms of what they inherently lack and how they are a problematic population to be managed within society (Hall, 1904; Hilliard et al.

2014). In modern concepts of youth development, this model or idea still exists, but perspectives on youth now reflect themes of empowerment and resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Blanchet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Cleverley & Kidd, 2010; te Riele, 2010; Farrugia, 2011). Consistent among a number of the following authors presenting community engagement initiatives in this section, resiliency and models of strength are considered to be more impactful frameworks for engaging and enabling youth towards more successful life courses.

Resilience can be understood as an ability to thrive and cope with stress, especially when faced with adversity. It is also associated with maintaining qualities of self-efficacy, adaptability, taking positive action, and supporting others (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Cleverley & Kidd, 2010). One such youth empowerment initiative is YouthScape (YS), which allocated 191 grants to youth across Canada within three years. The grants funded ideas presented by youth, such as entrepreneurship opportunities, subsequently resulting in increased personal responsibility and successes in these opportunities which increased confidence. By quantitatively analyzing this movement, which was geared towards increasing community resiliency among youth, Blanchet-Cohen and Cook (2014) assessed the impacts that these grants had on the youth and communities involved. They found that participants experienced an increase in confidence and skills, and improved social interactions with community. Blanchet-Cohen and Cook (2014) found that the grants created 'sparks' by demonstrating the potential of youth, and 'ripples' by encouraging the system to make changes to support youths' roles as contributing members of society.

Cannuscio, Dupuis, Graves, Hanson, and Hersh (2015) present an alternative arts initiative for youth, which focuses on housing insecurity. The project, journey2home, took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States over the course of a year and created multiple creative avenues for youth expression and subsequent audiences of their work. The project used photography, painting, printmaking, poetry, performance, music, and documentary film to encourage intergenerational dialogue about youth housing insecurity. Through public art events, regular employment for youth participants, and many other vehicles of artistic expression and change, the stories of youth participants changed over the course of the year. Cannuscio et al. (2015) highlight the experience of one young person who grew up in a youth shelter. After participating in journey2home, this person experienced stable employment, was attending college, and initiated a social impact fund to create change in Philadelphia to ultimately dismantle social inequality. This is an example of incorporating narrative building, or the telling of personal, autobiographical participant stories, into arts-based research. Although it does not demonstrate a wide scope of impact across a large sample of participants, it details the extent of unquantifiable impact that a young person has experienced, including substantial positive change and progression due to the influence of the arts initiative.

Similar to the goals and outcomes of journey2home and YouthScape, there is a Canadian initiative involving ongoing community-based participatory action research (PAR) aimed to enhance the engagement and personal and professional development of high-risk, marginalized youth (Yoshitaka, 2014). The goal of participatory action research is to increase the power of participant voices and involvement in order to facilitate social change (Kim, 2016). This project is youth driven and led, and builds on

the talents and strengths of youth leaders involved. The "youth engagement" research team of 16 youth leaders was formed across various community agencies in Edmonton, Alberta. Target outcomes for this initiative included social change and transformation of the system to support the development of marginalized youth through active engagement in collaboration with community and university partners. The group met over 50 times over the course of 18 months to discuss meanings, barriers, and developments for youth engagement. A key factor in the project was to allow youth to have a voice so that their initiatives could be conceptualized through relationship-building, respect, learning through experiences, and addressing the overall needs of at-risk youth (Yoshitaka, 2014). Yoshitaka (2014) found that this project was central to developing resiliency and community engagement among youth; this is also demonstrated in the two previously mentioned arts initiatives. One of the main challenges for these initiatives is that they are neither long-term nor consistent in the communities that they serve.

2.3 Arts Programming in Community and Institutional Settings

The previous section highlighted community engagement opportunities for youth in a broad capacity across multiple agencies or short-term locations. This section focuses on services and research studies utilizing arts that operate in singular or permanent community and institutional settings. The terms "resilience and engagement" play an important role not only in studies and evaluations such as the ones addressed below, but also in the data analysis portion of the study with SKETCH. The following studies, one completed at the national level and several local level programs, boast similar outcomes

as those found at SKETCH, including an increase in resiliency and engagement among the young people who interact with their services

It is important to research and assess the quality and delivery of services through community-based organizations to ensure their purpose in communities is being fulfilled and improved. The following study is an example of the type of research that has been conducted on a national scale to assess the quality and effectiveness of community organizations that offer arts programs for youth. The National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project (NAYDP), a quasi-experimental research design, was launched in 2002 and took place over the course of three years in five sites across Canada (Wright, John, Alaggia, & Sheel, 2006). The study focused on the inclusion of youth aged 9-15, from urban and rural low-income communities, with consideration for the cultural diversity of Canada. The project was launched to determine if community-based arts organizations were successful in the recruitment, engagement, and sustainment of participation of youths from low-income communities. Further, the program assessed artistic and social development, improvement in psychosocial outcomes such as conduct and emotional problems, and explored the perspectives of participants and their parents. One hundred and eighty-three youths participated in the study. Attendance forms, standardized behaviour checklists, questionnaires, observational data, and interviews with youth and parents were employed. Wright et al. (2006) report positive experiences through the program and high satisfaction as a result of the improvement of the youths' confidence, art, prosocial, and conflict resolution skills. This project demonstrates the importance of evaluating these types of arts organizations. Wright et al.'s (2006) study also utilizes multiple evaluation methods and tools in order to determine outcomes.

At the local level, such as within organizations that Wright et al.'s (2006) study was evaluating, various forms of art and arts-based programs are used as therapeutic, preventative, or rehabilitative outlets for youth and young adults who are marginalized or have had ongoing conflict with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, arts-based programs seem to have therapeutic properties when applied to other populations requiring support. Boekhovena, Bokera, Davidson, Cacciato, and Gray (2012) suggest that art can be used as a therapeutic method of overcoming mental health barriers, given that mental health is a serious issue and contributing stressor in the marginalized status of many youth. Prescott et al. (2011) suggest that there are only two studies of art therapy for homeless youth, but as further review suggests, currently there are many other studies that incorporate art as a therapeutic option for homeless youth. Art therapy has been used in diversion programs for juvenile delinquents and in prison settings to support rehabilitation and prevent recidivism. In the following subsections, a number of studies are presented which endorse the use of arts programming in three areas or settings. First, in supporting youth's mental health; second, in prisons and the juvenile justice system through diversion programs; and finally, through youth drop-in centres.

      2.3.1 Mental health. Not only do arts programs support youth at the social level, but mental health is addressed through arts-based approaches as alternative treatment methods. Boekhovena et al. (2012) identify the main sources of barriers to care including the fear of stigmatization, the impediment of the time it takes to receive care, and difficulty with access to appropriate mental health services, such as youth-friendly programs. Therapeutic opportunities through arts-based approaches may be a more beneficial option instead of or in combination with traditional support options. The

benefits of arts-based approaches include the facilitation of unique communication, possible resolutions through expression, unblocked emotions within a collectively creative setting, and overcoming stigmas associated with therapy (Boekhoven et al., 2012; Coholic, 2011).

Mindfulness has also emerged as an effective intervention for various mental health concerns with a focus on clinical treatment-related outcomes. Coholic (2011) suggests that the use of mindfulness through arts-based methods may be a successful option for young people involved with child protection and mental health services. In collaboration with a child protection agency and a children's mental health center, Coholic (2011) conducted a study involving 50 children in 6 and 12-week groups over the course of three and a half years. Guided by a grounded theory methodology, the study incorporated individual exit interviews at the conclusion of the program. The study demonstrated that children's participation fostered a sense of self-awareness in an engaging and non-threatening environment in which the youth could focus on their feelings and thoughts without judgement. One limitation of this study is that it could not assess long-term impacts of the arts-based mindfulness practices. In another study, Coholic, Eys, and Lougheed (2012) followed up on this idea of holistic arts-based group programming (HAP) and provided a point of comparison in their study through an arts and crafts group with the hypothesis that HAP involved children would score higher on resilience and self-concept/esteem compared to the comparison group. The most prominent difference in the two studies was the use of methods. Coholic (2011) employed a qualitative method while Coholic et al. (2012) utilized a mixed-design MANOVA to determine if HAP was influential regarding perceptions of self-concept and

resilience. The statistical significance was not found to be strong enough, however, the qualitative findings were promising and warranted continued study in the area of arts-based mindfulness. Further research into the benefits of arts-based therapies needs to be done in order to better serve youth with mental health issues and to compare the credentials of conventional treatment options.

2.3.2 Theatre-in-Diversion and Geese Theatre. Some youth participate in diversion programs, which are a form of rehabilitative action for young offenders processed within a formal judicial system. Diversion programs can include victim-offender mediation, community service work, restitution, and/or treatment/educational programs (Wilson & Hoge, 2012). Arts-based programs can fall within the treatment/educational category. Jordan and Daday (2015) designed the Theatre-in-Diversion program which is offered each year at Western Kentucky University (WKU). The purpose of this program is to engage at-risk teenagers through theatrical elements, while incorporating a research component for university students to study and analyze the effects of the arts-based intervention. Jordan and Daday (2015) found that few theatre-based diversion programs had been previously implemented and through a search of recent literature, they uncovered only three related publications on art/theatre-based diversion (see Garcia & Wallace, 2008; Turner, 2007; and Larison, Williamson, & Knepper, 1994). The program aligns with WKU's semestered schedule in order to suit the students in the undergraduate theatre program who are the primary facilitators of the program. The program is offered for youth who have committed a status offence and have been sent for diversion. Undergraduate sociology students also conduct an evaluation of the program each year. To produce a publication on this program,

interviews were conducted with a number of youths and parents of youths who were

involved in the program previously. The interviews suggested that parents believed

theatre-in-diversion was a good option for their children and would recommend it, while

youth experienced positive changes in various aspects of their lives and relationships.

Some felt more comfortable around people, fought less with and built better bonds with

their parents, and saw improvements in grades and attitudes towards education (Jordan &

Daday, 2015) The evaluation provides insight into the positive short-term outcomes of

the program, but further research within a larger sample size is required to better

understand the long-term effects of the program (Jordan & Daday, 2015).

In a similar context, the Geese Theatre Company is a well-established group

originating in Birmingham, UK, that has been working in criminal justice settings since

its inception in 1987 (Bottoms, 2010). Geese Theatre delivers theatre and dramatic

programming to groups of offenders and those at risk of offending inside and outside of

custodial institutions. The programs offered are catered to the group and its needs and are

often presented in a workshop format often culminating in a final performance. Geese

Theatre references an evidence library where anyone can access the extensive research

done on the impact of arts-based projects, programs, and interventions within the criminal

justice system, including the majority of published research on Geese projects

(geese.co.uk/research/evidence-library, 2018). The success of these programs has been

life changing for many participants based on the immersive, anti-oppressive nature of the

work (Baim, Brookes, & Mountford, 2002). In a different justice-based setting, Levy

(2012) offered an arts-based intervention program for female youth serving Youth

Protection or Youth Criminal Justice Act orders, wherein arts and media activities were

used for expression and to share experiences of trauma. This program empowered the young women through a personal healing process. It helped to build self-esteem, and it cultivated a "teens helping teens" attitude (Levy, 2012).

      2.3.3 Youth drop-in centres. Drop-in centres provide a range of supports for youth and adults in need of resources and activities, and offer varied delivery methods. As it pertains to their work in a drop-in centre, Foster and Spencer (2013) discussed that there is a prominence of research on drug use among youth that primarily focuses on frameworks of peer pressure and the need to conform, but pays little attention to young people's own interpretations of their relationship to drugs. The authors take a qualitative approach to constructing marginalized youths' deeper stories of interpretations of their drug use. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 participants from a youth drop-in centre in Ottawa, Canada, and the results highlighted the existence of control and self-mediation in regards to the participants' drug use. In contrast to the 'peer pressure' argument, the authors related drug use to the effect of friendships that encourage a sense of intimacy, trust, sharing, and belonging through drug use. The concept of control emerges from the perceptions and standards that participants hold themselves to in terms of how they balance their own drug use (Foster & Spencer, 2013). This work reinforces the need for qualitative research that enables youth voices to be heard beyond hard data and subjective researcher interpretation.

      Another drop-in/recreation center was the focus of a qualitative investigation on female youth subculture to determine how females construct identity through the interaction of gender and class (Wilson, White, & Fisher, 2001). Although no arts-based

methods were used, nor were arts activities a focus in the research, the drop-in center was located in Southern Ontario and a similar set of methods were used to explore these elements of youth culture. Wilson et al. (2001) used participant observation, observation, and focus group interviews to collect data. Their work provided a rich understanding of how young women deal with the conflict of gendered relations and remain empowered in particular activities. For instance, women requested other female-centric recreational opportunities through the centre because of the male-dominated culture of sports. Nonetheless, the women generally accepted this as the norm and participated at different levels from "watching the guys" to dedicated participation in sports or activities (Wilson et al., 2001).

Prescott, Sekendur, Bailey, and Hoshino (2011) consider resiliency and the creative process to be reciprocal: as creativity can be a catalyst for resilient behaviour, and in exhibiting resilient behaviour, one must have a sense of creativity. Prescott et al. (2011) used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine resiliency as a function of creativity among homeless youth. The sample of youth was draw from a youth-oriented drop-in art center. Two-hundred and twelve participants who attended the drop in center at least four times over the course of five years were studied. The authors used art center logs to quantify the data, which tracked attendance and progress over a five-year period. The data analysis suggested an increase in life achievements among youth who regularly attended the drop-in center. Interviews were also conducted with three attendees which directed the youth to narrate their stories of homelessness and the impact of resiliency and creativity in their lives. The importance of art in the participants' lives was described as (a) art being always available to you, like a friend; (b) as a form of rescue or a savior

from negative life choices; (c) as a shaper of identity, and (d) as a safe place for escape and expression (Prescott et al., 2011). At five years in length, this study is one of the longest projects which identifies impact over time.

MacDonald, Bluthenthal, Stokes, and Grunwald (2012) state that recently there has been an effort on the part of policymakers to pursue publicly funded programs that target concentrated poverty and related social disadvantage in urban locations. This is demonstrated within the vibrant neighborhoods of Toronto which feature numerous publicly funded organizations, projects, and objectives. From the perspective of crime policy and its subsequent implications, Welsh and Piquero (2012) contend that forms of delinquency prevention through intervention earlier on in the life course are important. There is demonstrated support in communities for investment into disadvantaged young people through a number of means. Social institutions such as family, education, and religion are examples, along with public and not-for-profit organizations and institutions such as those mentioned above. There is much research that assesses the role of these institutions in shaping behaviour (Welsh & Piquero, 2012), but an individual's role within them can also change over time due to outside forces. Youth are likely to "age out" of having access to social programs or services which may produce negative outcomes. "Aging out" is a term used to describe the outcome of the organizationally mandated "age range" of those youth who can utilize services, and the expectation to no longer require supports beyond a certain age. Subsequent to "aging out" or as a result of an improvement in social or economic positioning, individuals may interact with services in a volunteer or employment capacity. From a policy perspective, programs such as those outlined in the previous literature, and the quasi meta-analysis of the research

conducted on them, the promising nature of the findings may support policy directives for

investment in arts programs to engage wider marginalized populations. Investments may

also support young people as they transition out of community programs and into careers.

The data gathered from the current study is a strong indicator of the need for investment

in services such as the ones provided through SKETCH.

Previous studies use one or multiple methods to assess the quality and outcomes

associated with program delivery, but the current study with SKETCH is unique in that it

uses a set of methods that, when used collectively, provided rich and detailed results.

This study does not simply report on program outcomes, but demonstrates the fluid

nature of the life circumstances and levels of support that young people need to thrive,

especially in an urban populous. It provides anecdotal evidence of how art is used as a

vehicle for well-being, self-expression, and as a method of coping with the effects of

marginalization. Those who study youth and arts from an academic standpoint, along

with the service providers seeking support for their programs, are encouraged to analyze

the delivery of programs and services, and participation outcomes that make this

particular organization standout from comparable organizations. The research outcomes

on types of youth that access services is also unique to this study. Ethnonarrative, as the

methodological guide used in this study, is substantive for large organizations offering a

range of services because of the variability of data collection techniques. These

techniques are outlined in a discussion of ethnonarrative design and methods below.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGIAL DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Classifying Arts-Based/Informed Research

In methodological research design, research involving the arts can be classified in varying ways, such as arts-based research, arts-informed research, arts-based methods, and research assessing arts initiatives. Alternative to research done in other formats or contexts, arts-based forms of research are designed, conducted, and understood in ways that empower and change or challenge the way we think (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005). Sullivan (2006) puts this type of inquiry into context stating "art practice is a profound form of human engagement that offers important ways to inquire into issues and ideas of personal, social and cultural importance" (p. 32-33). Arts-based research methods allow the researcher to stretch the techniques and threshold for qualitative data collection beyond what is typically used. Subsequently, the way data is analyzed is also unique, and potentially more subjective, which requires caution. When it comes to the study of the arts being investigated using widely-regarded research methods, the results are subjective. Research utilizing art within the methodological design (arts-based methods) or as the focal point of inquiry (arts-based programs) is more diverse than can be covered in one paper. This sub-section serves to clarify the different ways that inquiry can integrate art.

Researching the arts and utilizing arts-based methods in research serve different functions, but often intersect. I will begin by explaining the terminologies used in arts-based inquiry and how they have been employed in recent literature. To understand, for example, the role and purpose of art used within research: often visual art can serve as a

substitute for linguistics-based research approaches (O'Donoghue, 2009). The collection of pre-existing works of art, art generated for a specific project, or generated texts, such as poetry or stories, are examples of substitutions for other methods of data collection (Hartnett, 2011). This approach is not limited to visual arts, but this substitution is often at the root of what is meant when referring to arts-based research. To consider how art can influence or benefit the research process, we must recognize its ability to induce emotion and challenge understanding. Art forms can also be disruptive and even disconcerting, serving to redefine how we construct assumptions and subsequently catalyzing transformative change (Bishop, 2004; Eaves, 2014).

In order to define arts-based research, the goal of this type of research must be considered as it pertains to each unique research study. Eaves (2014) builds upon a broad definition which allows one to imagine how arts-based methods can represent meaning. It is defined as a process by which human understanding can be expanded, disrupted, and/or reconciled through forms of expression, a synthesis of intuitive and logical thought, and development of empathetic participation (Estrella & Forinash, 2007; Barone & Eisner, 2012; & Eaves, 2014). Through unique thought evocation, arts-based research encourages avenues of expression that may not be reached through standard methods of inquiry. Alternatively and potentially more straightforward, Austin and Forinash (2005) define arts-based inquiry as:

> A research method in which the arts play a primary role in any or all of the steps
> of the research method. Art forms such as poetry, music, visual art, drama, and
> dance are essential to the research process itself and central in formulating the

research question, generating data, analyzing data, and presenting the research

results. (pp. 460-461)

Arts-based research is most popularly used in educational research, but has been

incorporated into many fields of study. It allows researchers to perceive and interpret the

world in new ways and uncover realities that may not have been known or accessible

through traditional methods (Eisner, 2008). Further, but the language of the academy is

not always inclusive of the communities that the core of academic inquiries aim to

influence or represent. In order to broaden the way explanatory literature presents

interpretations of phenomena, experiences, processes, and contexts, a more inclusive

approach to inquiry processes and representations can be conducted by means of

methodologies that embrace diverse forms of knowing (Cole & Knowles, 2008). These

forms of knowing emerge from everyday experiences that can subsequently be read and

understood by research participants and those interested in simply reading those texts

procured through these methods. McNiff (2008) encourages art-based researchers to

familiarize themselves with how artists inquire about their own social experiences and

how art forms serve as an agent of change for individuals and the world as a whole. In

doing so, experiences and impacts can be conveyed in an accessible format that can

influence change.

3.1.1 Commonly used arts-based methods. A general overview of arts-based

inquiry is inclusive of a broad range of techniques and methods, but contemporary

research has revealed more frequent production of types of innovation in arts-based

methods or methodologies. A prevalent methodology is A/r/tography (Irwin, 2008),

which is a form of inquiry often rooted in the practices of artists and educators. The practice itself is descriptive of the living inquiry of the researcher: those who inquire in the world through their own processes of art making and writing in reflective, reflexive, recursive, and responsive ways (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005; Irwin, 2008; Irwin, 2013). Engaging in A/r/tography involves theorizing and practicing through the creation of art and words that are interconnected to communicate meaning in a constant state of movement (Irwin, 2008; Irwin, 2013). A/r/tography is a reflexive state that a researcher can pursue as the foundational method of their work, or it can be used concurrently with other arts-based methods.

Goldstein, Gray, Salisbury, and Snell (2014) discuss the use of arts-based methodologies including performed ethnography and research-informed theatre. Performed ethnography or research-informed theatre involves transforming ethnographic data into scripts and drama that may be performed. These methodologies provide rich ways to collect, analyze, and share research through script creation, performance, and conversations following performance. They are practiced throughout Canada at institutions such as the University of Alberta, University of British Colombia, York University, and University of Toronto (Goldstein et al., 2014). Performed ethnography and research-informed theatre have also been termed "ethnodrama", as suggested by Grybovych and Dieser (2010), and Saldaña, (2005) who have presented diverse examples of ethnographic scripts.

A slightly varied example of arts-based methods used in research was presented by Conrad (2002) who used drama as pedagogy to construct meanings and

understandings on a specific topic in an inner-city high school classroom. Students

became participants by engaging in dramatic activities from which the research data

emerged. This data was organized in the form of scripts which allowed for the lived

experiences of teaching and learning to unfold while answering the research question

posed by the author/teacher/researcher (Conrad, 2002). Arts-based methods facilitate and

feed the creativity of young minds, allowing them to play a more active role within the

research design, which is why these methods can be considered ideal for work with

young people, especially diverse groups.

Art is often at the heart of culture, where cultural experiences transform through

artistic expression. An example is provided by Dion, Johnston, and Rice (2010), and

Dion and Salamanca (2014) who contributed to the inVISIBILITY: Indigenous in the city

project where Aboriginal students and parents as well as non-Aboriginal teachers created

digital stories about their schooling experiences. They held a three week art exhibit of

these digital stories along with the work of urban Aboriginal artists. Estrella and Forinash

(2007) suggest that using art forms allows for the voices of the groups being researched

to be heard, offering a forum for those oppressed or marginalized.

3.2 Combining Ethnographic and Narrative Methods

With the use of arts-based methods, and research regarding the arts, there is quite

a range of work available that uses both ethnographic and narrative methods, separately

or together. Examples of these works have been provided in the literature review section,

and in the current section. Qualitative methods under the categories of ethnography and

narrative have varying applications for the research they are selected for. Ethnography

can be conducted in a range of contexts, while narrative can be generated in multiple styles, targeting any type of story, though it is usually biographical. Combining ethnography and narrative methods allows for greater validity of results due to the availability on the part of the researcher to become a participant of the culture from which participants are gathered (Paulson, 2011; Black, 2014). The current study seeks to combine ethnographic and narrative building methods in order to facilitate results that provide an ideal look at the impactful nature of the organization chosen

Ethnography has been defined as "the science devoted to describing way of life of humankind" (Vidich & Lyman, 1985, p. 25), however, content generated through ethnography is defined and categorized based on the characteristics of analyses (Adler & Adler, 2008). This differs from scientific or more technical practices in that it engages the researcher in a creative process of articulating observations and interpretations. Adler and Adler (2008) categorize genres of ethnography based on the audience and rhetoric strategies employed within the research. These are divided into four forms including classical, mainstream, postmodern, and public ethnographies. Classical ethnography is the most relevant form, appealing more to qualitative researchers, emphasizing the researchers personal experience in the process overall. Mainstream ethnography seeks to write for a wider audience, in a more formal tone. Postmodern ethnography is significantly less formal, embracing subjectivity through use of narratives and multiple voices on the part of the researcher. Public ethnography, as the name implies, is suited to be understood by public audiences, often better incorporated into books rather than articles (Adler & Adler, 2008). Elements of each form are reflected throughout this analysis, but the latter three forms are less apparent. At the end of the process, classical

ethnography is the most accurate representation of the research conducted here due to the personal relevancy of the project. Nonetheless, the intended purpose was to appeal to wider audiences, advancing qualities of public ethnography, but also reaching for the narrative apex of postmodern ethnography while holding onto the fundamental support for in-depth interviews as demonstrated through mainstream ethnography.

Narrative inquiry and narrative building can be utilized in many forms based on the goal of the research. Chase (2005) explains that narrative inquiry centers on "biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (p. 651). Upon beginning an interviewing process, numerous studies make clear indications to their participants that the goal of the research is to collect a narrative account of the participant's life as it pertains to the study or research guide. Alternative research guides may be more structured based on the design of the interview questions or the desired outcomes of the interview process. In the current research design, the interview questions are semi-structured in a way that allows for open-ended responses to delve into a personal narrative if the respondent so chooses. The reason for this, as opposed to the design being strictly narrative building, is primarily based upon the restrictions and requirements for this to be a dual purposed research project and evaluation for SKETCH.

Beatty (2010) suggests that in order to fully submerse the reader in the experience of the emotions being revealed, a narrative approach must be taken so that misrepresentation of the data through the author's own words does not occur. Beatty (2010) also suggests that an individual's narrative is one of the most accurate ways to depict the emotional dimension of experience. However, there are advantages and

challenges to adopting a narrative approach. As ethnographers typically have trouble

judging and writing about emotions, an author's trials in illuminating participant's

personal meanings should not be the main point of focus (Beatty, 2010). As a limitation,

ethnography tends to move outward from experiences, diminishing, if not eliminating, the

personal significance of emotions. Where possible, emotion-driven data should speak for

itself. Narrative data often serves this purpose. Researchers increasingly make reflexive

accounts of their experiences, but these inclusions can also exist in the form of personal

narrative to complement other collections of data.

For example, Kidd (2009) uses a personal narrative, or storytelling account of his

own experiences during qualitative data collection. This is alternative to how narrative is

typically observed in research, which is often seen through narrative building with

participants rather than through a researcher's narrative. One could argue that Kidd's

(2009) narrative is an act of reflexivity transformed into a work of its own. His work

demonstrates the benefit to researcher narrative and reflexivity as understandings are

uncovered through this process that may not have been apparent initially and through the

data alone. Kidd (2009) comes to the realization that art, more than words collected

through interviews, told more about someone's experience of the world. In addition to

interviews, Kidd collected artwork and writing pieces to analyze the artistic expressions

of homeless youth in New York City and Toronto areas. He found that the creation of art

can be transformative for the homeless young people that create it, as well as for the

viewers and readers of their work (Kidd, 2009). For homeless youth, art is

transformative, providing a sense of individuality and valued identity, and can act as a

way of reaching others. When reflexive, narrative, ethnographic research is performed, the breadth of results allows for multiple levels of interpretation and analysis.

      3.2.1 Ethnonarrative. As Hansen (2006) explains, enthnonarrative draws upon the methodological frameworks of both narrative and ethnographic research, by supporting the use of discourse with contextual information surrounding that discourse. The duality of this approach allows for a movement beyond the presentation of text and discourse by combining it with elements of the context from which the text was generated. Context can be defined as a larger text surrounding a more specific text under observation (Hansen, 2006). It is assumed that in order to construct and represent reality through narratives, discourses that represent and construct organizational or institutional understandings, and the context within which those understandings exist, must be taken into consideration. An example of this would be coming to understand the core functions and positioning within society that an organization has before delving into collaborative research with that organization. The following includes the work of select authors who have used both methods, either independently or simultaneously, to generate a dissemination of their qualitative research results.

      To begin, Hansen (2006) utilizes the ethnonarrative method in a way that is most similar to the series of methods used within the current study. In conjunction with the Improvisational Theatre Company (ITC), Hansen (2006) conducted ethnography by being on-site every work-day for eight months. He attended shows, conducted long-term participant observation and in-depth interviews, took field notes, collected various texts, and generated a map of the ITC cultural assumptions and charts and diagrams outlining

ITC processes. His conclusions lead to the suggestion of a combination of all three approaches to text/context in order to generate interpretations through reflexive-hermeneutic shifts between texts; texts and contexts; and texts within contexts in an endosymbiotic relationship. Hansen's (2006) work emphasizes the suggestion for method combinations in ethnonarrative which supports the methodological framing within my own study.

Another example of combined methods is presented by Case and Hunter (2014) who employ an ethnographic approach by using narrative identity work over a 9-month timeframe with offender-labeled African American youth. Narrative identity work involves creating identities through the support and crafting of narratives. The main methods used to create narrative identities were interviews along with observations within the Peer Ambassadors (PA) program and at various events at community venues. The analyses suggested the existence of three types of counternarratives: (1) oppression narrative, which indicates a shared expectation of marginalization and being diverted onto a path of less value or opportunity; (2) resistance narrative, which enables the belief that though these youth have been problematic, their participation in PA is a form of empowerment to be a positive influence and to contribute to their community; and (3) reimagined personal narratives, which emerged as a positive, renewed sense of youths' personal conceptions of self through participation in the PA program (Case & Hunter, 2014). Outcomes such as the ones found in this type of work suggest that youth often have personal backgrounds that differ in a way that allows for researchers to make interpretations that categorize individuals based on their experiences.

Gubrium and Holstein (1999) encourage that qualitative researchers embrace the border of tension between narrative and ethnographic research as opposed to encouraging a divide. The source of this emergent border includes the growth of narrative voices from the field essentially speaking for themselves as opposed to the ethnographers speaking on behalf of their respondents and informants. Additionally, the qualitative researchers' own analytical self-consciousness is a source of the border. As narratives emerge into the foreground of research, they are seen to strengthen this border by displacement of ethnography, generating concern in the field. The challenge is to maintain a balance between ethnography and narrative analysis. Through this border tension, researchers must contend to profit from the interplay between narrative voices, social conditions and constructs, as well as personal research intent (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999). This interplay is accessible when considering multiple methods under the collective of ethnonarrative work. Taber (2010) utilizes this tension to overcome challenges in her own research by incorporating ethnographic variations to her data collection along with narrative. She encourages the use of an appropriate combination of methods that avoid restrictions on the research outcomes (Taber, 2010). These examples provide support for the use of ethnonarrative in this study, along with the methodological implications which will be discussed later in this paper.

3.3 Methods and Design

Researchers often investigate topics that are informed by their own personal interests, investments, or viewpoints (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). Alternatively, they may garner interest for a topic over time, encouraging them to develop a broader project

for inquiry. This may raise questions about the subjectivity embedded in their work, but it can also be beneficial for a researcher to have a personal interest in a subject, lending more experienced insight into the process. As Riemer (1977) suggests, researchers are quite likely to choose topics opportunistically based on their personal histories or settings. In the context of art, artistic experiences may also encourage new forms of research or impact research design (Finley & Knowles, 1995). Concurrent to being an undergraduate and graduate student, I have had the opportunity to work with arts organizations in a volunteer capacity and have practiced art forms personally and professionally during this time. As a performance artist myself, I have found art to be an element of release, creativity, confidence building, and personal and professional development. As an extension of my experience, I have observed and studied the positive impacts of art forms not only on marginalized groups, but among those from all backgrounds. As demonstrated in secondary research, there has been a substantial inclusion of youth, people involved in the criminal justice system and/or struggling with mental illness. This inclination toward the arts led me to inquire how the arts are employed within the criminal justice system, such as my brief discussion on diversion programs in the previous section, and within the community for those at-risk of or facing negative life circumstances. My interest in the study of youth, community, and the arts led me to SKETCH.

3.3.1 Research location: SKETCH. Formally named "SKETCH working arts for street-involved and homeless youth", SKETCH is the setting of this project and is located in the West Queen West/Trinity Bellwoods neighbourhood of Toronto, Ontario. SKETCH is a community-arts development initiative that creates equitable opportunities

for diverse young people living street involved, homeless, or otherwise on the margins to "experience the transformative power of the arts; to build leadership and economic self-sufficiency in the arts; and to cultivate social and environmental change through the arts" (sketch.ca, 2017). SKETCH is open to young people between the ages of 15-29, but often aged-out young adults will still contribute to the SKETCH community. Barker, Kerr, Nguyen, Wood, and DeBeck (2015) suggest that removing an age restriction on youth services or allowing for more open participation improves access to services among vulnerable individuals. SKETCH operates under the direction of a set number of paid administrative staff, community artists, and program facilitators. Often there are opportunities for young people to obtain short-term employment performing administrative duties or working as community artists. Volunteers such as placement students comprise a large portion of the individuals responsible for the daily duties in the studio space where programming takes place.

SKETCH follows an organizational guideline to navigate the growth, development, and support of young people that attend programming and participate at SKETCH. This is called the Theory of Change (ToC) (see Figure 1). The Theory of Change articulates a number of goals for the organization including engaging 1500 young people through the arts by 2018. Through three stages including arts engage, arts incubator, and arts platform, this three-point-engagement strategy allows for youth to interact with the arts in introductory to advanced forms. *Arts engage* activities allow people to reimagine the creative possibilities that may have been forgotten by allowing access to the space, and activities and arts materials within it. *Arts incubate* allows people to experiment with new ideas, increase skills, build relationships, learn from established

artists and peers, subsequently growing their ideas and capacities. *Arts platform* is the

most professionally connected stage wherein people develop their leadership abilities,

their own arts initiatives, connect to employment and educational opportunities, and

make artistic contributions to the community (sketch.ca, 2017). These three stages were

used to influence the formatting and choice of questions for the interview guide used in

this study to ensure that youth were asked appropriate questions based on the stage(s)

they were involved in.

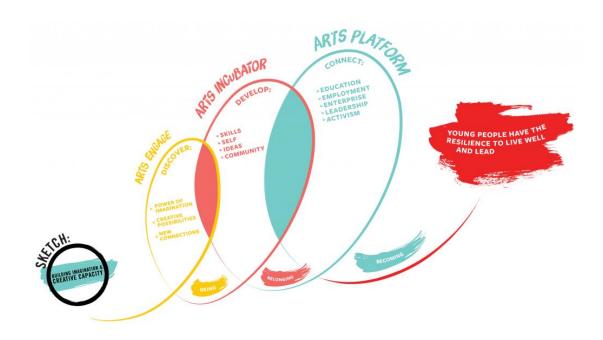Figure 1 depicts a concise visual representation of the Theory of Change

(sketch.ca, 2017)

As a general overview of the daily operations, in addition to workshops and

exhibit/performance events, SKETCH provides free programming approximately three

days per week that is slotted into a 4 hour session (including an hour for lunch or dinner)

during afternoons, evenings, or both. Programming varies by season as each

programming session lasts 10 weeks and new programming begins the following season

after a two-week administrative break. SKETCH acknowledges the barriers to travelling

that youth might face attempting to get to the SKETCH location downtown. For each

program session in the afternoon or evening (often Tuesday-Thursday), a number of

transit tokens are available to be requested by those who need it. In addition, a free and

nutritious meal is cooked in SKETCH's kitchen and offered for lunch or dinner

depending on the programming time. Cooking staff always acknowledge dietary

restrictions when selecting a menu for the day, providing healthy and vegetarian options.

This is incredibly important not only because people coming into SKETCH know they

will have a wealth of artistic opportunities and supports, but they will be fed and

comfortable in a space where elsewhere, they may not get a full or nutritious meal. In

addition to offering food and tokens, SKETCH has a referral process for youth who may

inquire about housing, legal services, community supports, or anything they may need to

get connected with. The programs offered also go beyond fundamental arts practice to

include things such as computer animation, web design and media arts, beat boxing,

mural arts, yoga, and more depending on demand and suggestions.

   3.3.2 Selecting location and access. The location for this research was selected

based on a recommendation by my thesis committee member, a professor who had

previously worked with the organization in a different capacity. Having had a prior

connection to the administrators at SKETCH, he was able to reach out and inquire if they

would be willing to collaborate with a student researcher to work independently in the

organization, or alternatively to assist other research initiatives at SKETCH while still

fulfilling the thesis research project. I was able to connect with SKETCH in a way that

would meet my research requirements by allowing me to utilize multiple methods over the course of my time there, but also generating data that would support them in their own program evaluations. Once connected, the program associate (PA) at SKETCH became a co-investigator and gatekeeper. A gatekeeper allows access to a specific community and can provide introductions and establish an appropriate environment for the research process (Jensen, 2008). The PA and I collaborated to create an interview guide that suited both the organization's requirements and my own. She also connected me with a diverse range of participants and sat in on the focus groups. SKETCH in Toronto was an ideal location as it is well established in the community and offers programming and supports that aligned with my own interests and expectations for an arts-based community organization.

Access can be defined as "the appropriate ethical and academic practices used to gain entry to a given community for the purposes of conducting formal research" (Jensen, 2008, para. 1). Preliminary access to the organization was granted, but negotiating access to conduct a study under a specific set of goals is discussed later on. Once preliminary access was gained into the organization, ethics approval was sought through the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Research Ethics Board (REB). The application was approved on March 7, 2016 after minor revisions to the research design and guide through alteration of a few questions and the consent forms to minimize risk. Prior to formal ethics approval, the PA and I met on a weekly basis in the shared space, Artscape Youngplace, home to SKETCH and a number of other community groups. We developed a research timeline that was suitable for both of our initiatives and coordinated the preparation of my dual role as a researcher and volunteer in the space.

3.4 SKETCH Background and Orientation

As with many influential arts organizations, SKETCH conducts its own research to determine outcomes on the quality of programming delivered, along with a broad understanding of how many people they are serving, and the demographics of those that they reach. Attendance and participation records allow for the administrative team to plan accordingly for the future, and gather statistics about the young people that come in including what programs they are attending and if they are eating the prepared meals. This is collected in host and facilitator logs after each programming session. These logs contain the approximate number of attendee's, things that went well for the facilitators and hosts that day, and any issues or suggestions that arise. As a volunteer host in the space, I filled out a host log and answered these questions on a number of occasions. This quantified assessment of SKETCH's functions is reported quarterly at strategic executive meetings. Unfortunately, there has not been extensive research done at the qualitative level. A number of focus groups have taken place in the past to assess various functions within the organization, but none of these effort have remained consistent.

3.4.1 Research on SKETCH. Before conducting my own research, I had to look at what has previously been done with the organization in a research capacity. SKETCH has made available the research reports that have been constructed for various means and projects within the organization. The "Arts Engagement and Quality of Life: A SKETCH Arts-Based Research project" shares similar objectives with my research within SKETCH. The project provides empirical support that arts increase youths' quality of life in substantial ways by increasing health and wellbeing, allowing youth to reclaim their

own narrative by actively constructing them, building self-direction through arts, and mitigating the impacts of their experiences of marginalization (SKETCH, 2013). In particular, the Arts Engagement and Quality of Life project used a series of focus groups that consisted of arts-based exercises and an Arts Engagement and Quality of Life survey. The focus groups that I conducted also engaged in arts-based exercises to invite thought, and a demographic survey was completed by all who attended. This will be discussed further in upcoming sections.

"Me (re)making Me: Community Arts in Community Health" (SKETCH, 2012) was a project initiated by SKETCH to determine the value and impact of bringing the arts into a non-arts setting (the Central Toronto Community Health Centre). This project was also done with the use of focus groups engaging 84 people. The response was a positive one in favour of continuing the relationship of offering arts activities in non-arts settings like community health centres and hubs. There were recommendations for incorporating arts into other areas of young people's lives such as housing, shelter, education, and employment (SKETCH, 2012). Another report is "New Eyes, An Arts-Based Community Research Project: Community Report" (SKETCH, n.d.), which was a research project that was led by newcomer and immigrant youth who experience forms of marginalization. Some of the focus groups offered through New Eyes were also used for Me (re)making Me. Through the use of arts to engage other newcomer youth communities, the youth leaders identified and expressed barriers that they face. Applicable to any community-based research in Toronto, it was noted that immigrants and refugees in Toronto, especially those whose refugee status is a result of the current world and political climate, are at a greater risk of homelessness. This suggests a need for

programming and supports that are suitable for newcomers, and also for methods of research that address a diversity of research participants.

Finally, Nat Tremblay, an individual that I came to meet and work with at SKETCH, wrote a three-volume report and toolkit titled "Artful Anti-Oppression: A toolkit for critical and creative change makers" (SKETCH, n.d.). This toolkit provides an extensive explanation, review, and operational look at how an anti-oppression framework can and should be woven into community work as well as personal and social values. Anti-oppression awareness and training was an important part of my experience at SKETCH as a volunteer and researcher. Organizations that emphasize anti-oppression are hubs for encouraging safe environments for marginalized groups, building respect through active participation, and acknowledgement of systemic problems (Karabanow, 2004). Before I could become fully immersed in the SKETCH community and programs, I was required to go through a training process that all new volunteers, facilitators, and community artists had to attend. This facilitator training included a tour of the facilities and how each space should be treated, along with training on the type of responsibilities that each individual in the space has. The anti-oppressive mandate is a strong indicator of how each individual should function and treat others in the space. A visual representation of some of these expectations and held values and beliefs within the space was created (See Fig. 2). I ensured that these values were instilled in my interview techniques, and my participation in the studio space on a daily basis. Before moving on to the research results, it is important for the reader to understand any restrictions or restraints that were required to conduct my own research and the negotiation process associated with it.

Figure 2 highlights the shared expectations, values, and beliefs that are maintained in the programming space and day-to-day operations.

3.5 Role in the Organization and Negotiating Access

Negotiating access was a process of agreeing upon a set number of goals for this research project that adequately responded to the needs of my project as a graduate researcher, and the organization's needs in allowing research to be done on certain terms. My initial proposal was to facilitate a narrative building process through interviews with youth which would allow them to share their personal stories of accessing the arts, its impact in their lives, and their future goals, telling their narrative story at any part in their lives where it suits them. One barrier to this, and subsequently attempting to learn more about the personal circumstances of each participant, was the restriction upon questions I could ask the youth at SKETCH based on the organizational mandate. Administratively,

there was a preference to collect information that was most relevant to the evaluation that SKETCH was seeking through these interviews. Due to other factors including restraints on the length of interviews/focus groups and sticking to the elements within the Theory of Change, this narrative building would have to happen upon the interviewee's own terms should they choose to tell their story without specific prompting. I was fortunate to gain insight into the personal stories of a small number of youth whose stories and experiences came out naturally. Personal experiences regarding education, community connections, relationships, and employment did arise mainly through the interview process, but less so through the focus groups. Despite this contrast, there was still an element of narrative building for a number of participants. I was able to gather a wealth of valuable information regarding the impact SKETCH had on these participants while also learning more generally about the types of individuals that access these services.

My role at SKETCH, apart from conducting my own research, was to work alongside the PA to develop program evaluation questions based upon the Theory of Change that we would facilitate congruently. The PA and I met weekly beginning in early February, 2016 to develop an interview guide and a focus group guide (built and condensed from the interview guide) that was succinctly written to compel participants to reflect upon the core goals of the Theory of Change in their interview. The first set of interviews (and focus group) began within the second last week of March, 2016, at the end of the winter programming session. As I had not spent time in the studio space before this first set of interviews, participants were gathered based on the recommendation of the PA. She referred SKETCH attendees to me ensuring that the individuals selected were involved in a variety of ways at SKETCH. Their involvement could be within short-term

programs, the regular ongoing seasonal programming, or the Centre for Indigenous Theatre. The second round of interviews, which were follow-up interviews and two focus groups, took place in May, 2016, at the end of the spring programming session. These participants were chosen both by referral from the PA, and through verbal invitation that I was able to provide once I knew more of the attendees from being in the space myself. See Appendix A for the focus group guide where the core goals were addressed through a set of discussion and art-making questions, while probing questions were listed to allow for participants to think more about what they could discuss/create art about. Those youth who participated in a one-on-one interview had more of an opportunity to discuss and explore their own personal narratives as the conversation was more open-ended and there was extra time to focus on the individual rather than group responses. I will discuss the specific details of the design and facilitation of the interviews, focus groups, and additional methods in the following section.

My role in the space when I was not communicating with folks to conduct interviews and focus groups was largely spent as a host. A host is a volunteer who assists in preparing the space for programming by fulfilling a number of tasks. Often hosts are placement students from high schools, universities, and colleges. The designated tasks include setting up tables and chairs for meals and social space, ensuring that program facilitators have everything they need for their sessions, and preparing an easy-to-engage activity for anyone to participate in once they get to the space. This easy-to-engage activity is especially helpful to those who are new to the space and do not know where to get started, or for those who just do not want to participant in the organized programming for the day. Hosts are available to talk and listen. Hosts are also responsible for making

coffee and ensuring there are snacks and supplies at the comfort table for youth to access

and encouraging youth to sign in so that there is a count of people who attended

(verification by given name or ID is never required). Hosts greet everyone who enters the

space and makes them feel welcomed by being open and available to talk to anyone who

might need someone to listen or to provide a referral for additional supports. Throughout

programming, hosts are responsible for signing out equipment such as cameras and

laptops to those who might need them, handing out transit tokens for those who request

them, assisting with dish washing and clean up from the meal, and to be trained and

prepared for crisis intervention should anything arise. As a host, I was able to conduct

participant observation by observing and participating in the regular activity that took

place within the studio space, along with getting to know the youth better through daily

interactions. The next section explores recent literature that describes and utilizes similar

methods to the ones used for this project. I will then explain how this methodology

worked for me and how it influenced my inquiry.

3.6 Choosing and Deploying Ethnonarrative

Ethnonarrative was selected through doing a review of literature which used

qualitative methods in similar settings. Originally, interviews were expected to be the

primary source of data collection, but as the project evolved, it became clear that

additional methods would be most beneficial in the chosen setting. Once SKETCH was

the established point of research, I understood that an immersive experience in the

environment would allow me to understand the organization as a system and how the

people operate within it. I had determined that an organization such as SKETCH was not

one that you could simply enter into and understand its purpose and function quickly and easily. It would take time to understand how the organization serves the people it provides supports and opportunities for, as well as the communities that they interact with. With this in mind, I knew an ethnographic approach would allow me to immerse myself in the SKETCH community and be an active contributor to the inner work flow. For instance, Tedlock (1991) suggests that aside from historical archetypal explanations of ethnographers, there is a new type of ethnographer that is more passionate about the coproduction of knowledge generated through interactive dialogues internally and externally.

After meeting with the PA weekly, we determined that I would begin a placement at SKETCH to assist with programming sessions as a host. During this time, I would conduct participant observation by hosting in the studio space twice a week during session times. Prior to my placement, I spent time in these meetings learning about operations and configuring research goals, questions, and formatting. Soon after, I attended training sessions and a studio show night which allowed for the youth artists from the winter session to present, perform, exhibit, sell, and demonstrate their work culminated over the previous ten weeks. Each program session is ten weeks long and there are four seasonal program sessions in total. I began my placement at SKETCH at the end of April, 2016, and finished at the end of June. During my participation, I took field notes of my observations and experiences while I was hosting in the space. These observations are tied into my analysis of the data collected from interviews and focus groups. Focus groups and interviews were scheduled to take place at the end of two separate program sessions. Initially these would take place at the end of the spring and

summer sessions, but meeting earlier in February allowed us to do the first set of

interviews and focus group at the end of the winter session, before my placement began.

This did influence my own dynamic as an individual facilitating research who had never

experienced the programming environment prior to these first interviews. I will discuss

this dynamic as an element that impacts the need for a particular ethnonarrative approach

in similar settings.

Focus groups were used as a data collection method and interviewing technique to

allow for a convenient platform to hear multiple voices in a shorter period of time.

Historically, focus group sizes have been a parameter of concern, with too many

participants being hectic and restricting extensive follow-up data, while too few

participants may yield results that are too narrow or restrictive (Zuckerman-Parker &

Shank, 2008). A sample of 16 participants was used to capture the diversity of youth that

attended programming over the course of two ten-week sessions, each participating in

either an interview or focus group. This sample was established once SKETCH attendees

responded to an invitation from the PA or were referred by a program facilitator to take

part in the study. A combination of focus groups and semi-structured interviews were

used which allowed for flexibility in conducting follow up interviews with participants.

Semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted during the second round with a

select few participants who had already done an interview or participated in a focus

group. The quality of information gathered in both the semi-structured interviews and the

focus groups allowed for follow-ups to take place with any participant. I composed

individualized follow-up questions based on the answers participants had provided in

their first interview to gage what sort of change had taken place over the course of the three months in between.

At the end of the winter program session and before my placement in the spring, I conducted five one-on-one interviews, and one focus group with four individuals in it. Interviews lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to 90 minutes and focus groups lasted from 2.5 hours to 3.5 hours. At the end of the spring session, I conducted three follow-up interviews, one with an individual who had been interviewed previously, and two with individuals who participated in the first focus group. Follow-up interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour. I also facilitated two focus groups after the spring session, one with four participants and one with three participants. All of the folks who participated in the spring focus groups had not been interviewed previously, but all of them I had interacted with in some way over the spring session.

During the interview process, my interview guide provided me with a variety questions to follow and navigate the interview, but essentially, the participants' answers guided the conversation and my subsequent choice of questions to follow. The interview guide was broken down into five sections: background information; involvement at SKETCH; wellbeing; skills (and goals); and connections (to relationships, community, employment, education, etc.). Some participants responded in a narrative, story-telling format, while others chose to answer each question without deviating from providing the information being asked of them. The focus group interview guide was a condensed version of the one-on-one interview guide as it posed a broader question related to each of the five sections to encourage discussion. Each focus group question was written out

on poster paper, surrounded by probing words or phrases to support their thought process and responses. Each participant was provided with sheets of poster paper and art supplies (markers, pencil crayons, paints) so that they may write out their thoughts, and present their ideas through drawings, paintings, or written words for a select number of questions. Some questions were labelled strictly for discussion, while other questions were presented as art-making questions (see Appendix A). Participants had time to draw and reflect, and a discussion would take place afterwards regarding what they had produced and thought about. We found that it was important to allow participants to engage in the focus groups process in an artistic way, knowing that SKETCH is a place for artistic creation and expression.

Although arts-based methods of data collection are beneficial to the participant and the researcher, I found that in this particular setting, participants engage in their art forms on such a regular basis in the space, that they feel limited in their verbal exploration of their craft and experiences. Outside of facilitator and volunteer training, it appears rare that participants embrace an opportunity for self-reflection on what they experience at SKETCH. Participants often found it more helpful to verbally communicate their feelings and experiences despite the option made available to express their thoughts through visual representation. Thus, even though we had encouraged an art-making element to the project, utilizing an arts-grounded method, conversation was the preferred method of communication. Those who did utilize art supplies each interacted differently with what they were offered, and this will be discussed in the results section. Rather than providing images of the few pieces of art created during focus group sessions, I have

chosen to describe some of the images created by participants and elaborate on the descriptions of their work.

To support the interview process, a demographic survey was administered to focus group participants to allow for them to indicate their background details privately and to cut down on discussion time. Interview participants were asked background questions at the beginning of their interview, therefore this survey was not necessary for them. Titled as such, the *SKETCH Program Evaluation Focus Group Survey* consisted of questions regarding gender, age, ethnicity, living condition/circumstances, education/training, employment, sexual orientation, and participation at SKETCH (See Appendix B)

3.7 Participants

Participants for this study were selected with the assistance of the Program Associate. The PA was my point of access to the youth at SKETCH. Her knowledge of the individuals that attended SKETCH on a day to day basis allowed for us to reach out to a diverse range of individuals that we hoped would best represent the population of youth that attended programming. The PA reached out to program leads for contact information for youth who she thought would be well suited to participate, and to individuals through email whose contact information she already had. She inquired with individuals who participated in a range of different programming at SKETCH and who appeared to be engaged at varying levels of the Theory of Change. This classification suggested that some individuals had been attending SKETCH for a long time and either participated in programing casually, or were more committed to developing an artistic

craft. Alternatively, some individuals had been attending for a shorter period of time, but were quick to want to use the space as a platform for their art. Consistency was a commonality among all participants; attendees who only came once or twice were not included, but those who attended consistently in a short-term program or over the long term were.. Short-term participants, for example, were those who participated in Indie Studio, which was a professional artistic development program that lasted one full ten-week programming session. Some Indie studio participants continued at SKETCH and some did not. Long-term participants were those who had been attending the weekly programming at SKETCH consistently for many months, or even years.

As a researcher, it was important to mentally separate myself from the participants to acknowledge my place within their personal spaces of interaction, and to reinforce my role as a passive researcher in day to day interactions (outside of structured interview times). Being present in the space meant participating in some of the same activities and sharing experiences, but this participation does not warrant a shared place as a social actor. As both an artist and a researcher, these roles can become blurred in a researcher context, but the reflexive position taken throughout allowed me to speak from my experiences in an academic context, with a background in art. This stance allowed me to become both a participant and a researcher who was welcomed in both capacities.

3.8 Demographics

In total, sixteen young adults participated in either an interview or a focus group over the course of three months. The ages of these individuals ranged from 20-28 years old with two ages missing. Eight participants identified as female, five as male (one

female to male transgender/bisexual, one two-spirited/gay), one as male/female, one as

transgender/gender fluid/non-binary, and one as two-spirited/gender fluid. With regards

to ethnicity, two participants identified as First Nations individuals, four identified as

Black or African Caribbean, one as Middle Eastern, one as Filipino, one as European, one

as South East Asian, one as Asian, one as South Asian, one as African/Caribbean/Middle

Eastern, one as Latin American, one as African/Caribbean/European/Jewish, and one as

European/Middle Eastern/Latin American/Indigenous. Fifteen out of sixteen participants

considered their current housing to be stable (one missing), while seven of these fifteen

expressed that they had experienced homelessness in the past (one missing). Two

participants were full or part-time employed, seven were under-employed, and six were

unemployed (one missing). Frederick, Chwalek, Hughes, Karabanow, and Kidd (2014)

define housing stability as "the extent to which an individual's customary access to

housing of reasonable quality is secure" (p. 965). Many of the participants fall on a

continuum of housing stability in their lifetime, from previously having complete

instability, to complete stability, or stability with current threats to that stability.

3.9 Consent

Consent for participation in this study was gathered at the beginning of each

interview and focus group. Prior to this, participants were welcomed to join the study

through email communication. The purpose of the study, both graduate research and

SKETCH evaluation, was expressed through this communication. Before formally

beginning an interview or focus group, a verbal overview of the study and consent script

was delivered to participants, and a lengthier consent form was given to them for review

to sign, and a copy to take home. After reviewing, participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any point, although, all declined to withdraw. Written consent was collected on behalf of all participants.

3.10 Defining youth and young adults

In anticipation of the interactions that would take place through this project, I had positioned myself to expect my interactions to be with those I would consider "youth". In reality, participants were predominately older than expected. Studies regarding youth often seek out definitions of youth that are biologically or developmentally determined (Harlan, 2016). Depending on the context of the research, the term youth may refer only to those who are school-aged or considered students. Alternatively, an age limit may be established for a particular study, and the selected group labelled youth. A slight deviation from what I had expected, I found myself encountering a largely young adult population at SKETCH, with attendees scarcely younger than 20 years of age. Although this programming is targeted towards youth, the organization supports the inclusion of young adults up to the age of 29, but there is flexibility beyond this apex. Participants have been known to transition to mentors, facilitators, and community artists, therefore contributing to the appearance of more young adults from their late 20's into their 30's in the space. This is a consideration for understanding the organizational goals and, subsequently, the needs of young adults in urban Toronto. Throughout this paper, when referring to youth or young adults, my intention is to be inclusive of individuals of all ages that utilize community spaces and supports. For the results of this study in

particular, using the terms youth or young adults will refer to anyone who accesses the resources at SKETCH.

3.11 Analyzing the Results

In order to determine prominent categories and themes that emerged in the transcription data from interviews and focus groups, the transcripts were coded thematically based on keywords. Some of the coded categories included self-care (grouped into wellbeing), as it was a consistent question throughout the interviews, along with education, training, and support. Further categories were explored through the narrative flow of each transcript. Categories including connections, personal conflict, impact, and organizational improvements were created. These categories emerged from individualized narratives, while the previously mentioned keywords like support and education tended to be consistently answered among all participants. Further analysis of the data allowed for secondary discussion in three areas, including the documented developments over time that a small number of participants experienced. This was made possible through the follow-up interviews that took place once a second session of arts programming was complete. The follow-up interview content can be found in the discussion section. The second area was based upon the experience of the two Indigenous participants who did not attend SKETCH but were involved in the Centre for Indigenous Theatre which affiliates with SKETCH. Finally, the third area addresses elements of interview discussion which ultimately highlight what SKETCH as an organization cannot provide or is beyond their scope of service to youth in Toronto; this can also be found in the discussion section. The following section will explore how the dominant themes

relate to the impact of the arts and SKETCH as an organization on the sample population

of marginalized young people who participated in this project.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

4.1 Support and Wellbeing

4.1.1 Spatial impact. Focus group participants were asked to take 5-10 minutes to draw or write out their thoughts regarding the atmosphere at SKETCH. Similar feelings were shared across all participants with regards to feeling welcomed, supported, and as though it was a very "chill" or relaxed space. Some participants chose to create artwork to depict their responses. Illustrations included a rainbow to represent the inclusiveness of the space, and a bowl of fruit to represent the fact that there is always a bowl of fruit (or other snacks) out in the open for folks to access, which fosters a welcoming and nourishing environment with access to healthy options. The space itself was doted upon for its adaptive nature in accommodating independent work and group programming, programming that can be individualized as well depending on each participants personal goals. In addition, the space was found to be very motivating to be in as a place where there is a collective similarity in artistic goals and purposes for utilizing the space.

Young adulthood is often a stressful time where youth seek outlets to minimize or manage stress and anxiety. Coping mechanisms manifest in many forms, positive and negative, but artistic expression and collective environments offer a positive mechanism for coping with stressful life situations and maintaining a state of wellbeing. When the concept of self-care was discussed, arts practice was one of the tools that all participants prioritized in order to support themselves physically and emotionally. While reflecting on their own self-care and utilizing the space, one focus group participant stated:

*I think this is a space where we didn't have to do that (*be stressed) *because we allow our self to create and to essentially take care of ourselves in like what you said about how we want to tap into our emotions through expressive ways. And that really obviously helps with mental health, right.*

Alone, the availability to engage in this artistic process is highly valued. When you combine this with the resources available through SKETCH such as healthy meals, a supportive community, and referrals to other resources, it allows youth to come into the space and focus on themselves and their goals rather than worrying about inconsistencies or insufficiencies associated with their personal situation. Youth reported improvements in mental health and nutrition through their participation at SKETCH. This appears to stand in contrast to other community centres and organizations that do not offer the same selection or quality of services.

The contrast between SKETCH and other community organizations/services was an ongoing conversation both inside and outside of interviews (i.e., during programming hours). Many youth and homeless individuals in the city attend multiple drop-in centers and community organizations. Participants made comparisons between SKETCH and other drop-in centres in the city, identifying the uniqueness offered through SKETCH. One participant stated:

It was a chill space where I didn't feel like – I didn't feel grungy and like I wasn't welcomed because of my like my streetness, you know, which was key. And I think that's one of the bit parts of sketch that is so important, like they ask you on the form, are you under-housed? They don't turn you away or make you feel gross for

being under-housed, which is a common feeling at a lot of drop in centres. Like

even though it's designed for someone who's under-housed, there's still this like,

stigma, there's some sort of lapse in dignity, like people look down on you. This is

more of a peer zone. Where people, they'll always view you on the same level

despite whatever job you have, despite whatever living situation you're in, it's

definitely friendlier.

The physical space that SKETCH offers stands out due to its inclusive nature and

welcoming environment. Youth consistently pointed out the positive "vibe" that was

experienced when entering the space.

4.1.2 Support. After addressing how the space made participants feel, discussions

transitioned into an assessment of how the organization provided support for youth. The

element of support was a prominent topic on numerous levels, varying by participant.

One participant created a visual representation of what support at SKETCH meant to him.

He illustrated a connected chain and followed up with a description stating: "*Nobody has*

to say I need more support, it's kinda already there. A chain – if you pull on it, the

support's there, but if you're not pulling on it, the support's still there." I found this to be

an excellent analogy for the people and the space that characterizes SKETCH.

Furthermore, the chain links were each depicted being a different colour to represent the

diversity of people who have been to SKETCH. This chain analogy is influenced by the

fact that the organization does not offer programming alone, but a range of other supports

that youth coming into SKETCH can access at any time. Regarding the question of

supports one participant stated:

They have workshops based on what services we're getting, should we be getting more/better services, there's always discussions about community housing or mental health or what's available for people that are suffering, that are unemployed, like SKETCH is always offering trainings for individuals that want to get employed, within SKETCH or something that's relevant to it so I feel like they're like just covering so much in terms of that.

As a downtown location that offers a wide range of supports, communicating and sharing experiences of these supports is imperative to getting the word out to other youth in need. Word of mouth is incredibly important when it comes to community supports and this is apparent simply through the outcome of this research initiative, which was partly supported by word of mouth communication. An example of the reach that SKETCH has beyond its own advertising intentions, is the connections that youth make with each other at SKETCH and continue to maintain to support each other. One participant states:

It's helpful when they (SKETCH) *do offer to give money, not just for me but because I know individuals that would need it. And so I text them like come over to this thing, they're going to give you twenty dollars at the end of it, you've gonna engage in a cool discussion. And even when I can't attend it, I will tell other people to come because I know they need it.*

Some youth who participated were unemployed and struggled to find stable employment, therefore volunteering with SKETCH for various purposes has allowed them to earn honorariums, such as through this project, which has been helpful.

When participants made connections with other youth at SKETCH, not only did they find they could offer each other referrals to things taking place in the studio and outside of it, but they built each other up to become more confident with their craft or any new art forms they were pursuing. For example, one participant stated:

I'm connecting with a lot of people and developing strong relationships with the people who've given me a lot of like motivation and confidence at SKETCH. The people who I work with, so, yeah. I feel like I've grown to accept a lot of myself from being here.

Peer relationships with like-minded individuals in this type of setting offer an element of support that can foster resiliency and self-efficacy. A focus group participant shared their experience of support from peers and mentors at SKETCH:

Having people to tell me, "you have the potential to do all these things with your art. Look at all these cool things you can do with your art." It wasn't really something I ever thought was possible and now, this is only the beginning, there's so much more I can do with all of this, and at this point I feel really hopeful…. I feel like having those people involved helped me go there and gave me the confidence I needed to put myself out there and make more connections and find endless possibilities.

Youth also supported each other through building friendships and a system of teaching and learning. Learning from program facilitators took place as a regular practice, but many people also learned from their peers in daily interactions.

Support was consistently discussed across both the interviews and focus groups. Focus group participants found support through specific avenues that they were involved in such as Indie Studio, where they could work on their own projects and collaborate with other artists, and for others through the general resources that SKETCH offers such as daily programming and food. Immigrants are included in the demographic of young adults that use centres such as SKETCH. These individuals benefit from this type of programming in Canada as there is a lack of available and accessible supports in other countries. From the perspective of an individual who was an immigrant to Toronto, one participant found SKETCH to be very beneficial:

> *I feel very happy when I visit SKETCH. I always find with myself when using these kinds of programs or government community centres that it supports me a lot. I'm not from here, and we don't have these at home, so I'm very grateful for that service and community support. I'm from Columbia. You can apply for grants there, but they don't give you much money and there aren't places like this. So I really appreciate it.*

Themes regarding "free and accessible" came up often in conversation, along with the outcomes associated with free supports. One participant stated:

> *This is a place where, I feel instead of me draining my energy levels to care for somebody else, its people caring for me. Even a simple thing like not having to think about making lunch, cause like when you're a single parent, sometimes you're like you know eating was too much effort today, I'm gonna lay down and sleep. Just that simple thing affects the rest of my self-care*

This same participant, among others, has had access to things such as referrals or

opportunities which have supported them to find work, performance opportunities or

even suggestions for housing options. The availability of technology in the space is an

asset to youth as they have the option to sign out things like laptops and cameras not only

for their own artistic endeavours, but to use on a personal level for things such as jobs

searches and other upkeep. This individual was able to secure safe and affordable housing

by having access to a laptop at SKETCH.

Almost all participants mentioned in their interviews that they attended other

community organizations. A common theme among those who shared their experiences

about or provided a list of their other community associations, was that these places were

culturally or socially relevant to them as individuals. For example, The 519 is an agency

and registered charity committed to addressing the needs of the LGBTQ community in

Toronto, providing counselling, programming, and resourceful services in a free and

inclusive space (the519.org/about). The 519 came up multiple times in discussion by two

participants. The transgender participant that I spoke to both in a focus group and a

follow-up interview spoke about his experiences with 519 and his perception of their lack

of organization to promote and support new ideas that they likely have the funding to

support. He states:

> *We actually just did evaluations for the trans mentorship program out of the 519*
>
> *and I did talk about SKETCH a lot. I was like yeah you guys don't really get shit*
>
> *done, you know who gets shit done? SKETCH… They were like oh what can we*
>
> *do to emulate SKETCH, I'm like, you can't. I'm sorry, you're just bad at this.*

His example stood out to me as a starting point for my own understanding that some attendees do believe that SKETCH as an organization does many things better than other community centres. Participants stated that the facilities at SKETCH were better than 519 and other community centres could simply not compare to SKETCH in a number of ways. One focus group participant spoke candidly about his experience with other community centres and the lack of access other deserving young people experience:

> *There is definitely no sense of community, no sense of programming for each and every demographic of people regardless of race, sexual orientation, accessibility needs, it's kind of just a building run by the government where they said "hey, we did it, thanks for funding us, we solved the problem." And I take that wherever I go no matter what I'm doing, the fact that I'm here* (at SKETCH) *and this is here to me is already the best alternative, before we've solved any problems. So if there was anything that could be done to make what's happening here more accessible everywhere, that would be great. Even if it's making it really easy for people from faraway places, whether it's East Scarborough or North West Toronto, on the margins, being able to get here fast, or making something happen out there for them. That would be really great. Because I know so many people out there who are like "yeah, I'm really passionate about my art, but a) I don't have tokens and b) the bus ride is like an hour and a half, and I either have to work or do shit for my mom," and that's the reason that I'm not at SKETCH twice a week.*

From an evaluation standpoint, these comments were beneficial for SKETCH in addition to comments made about improvements or suggestions that would address meeting the goals outlined in the Theory of Change. From an academic perspective, these indicators provide insight into where research and development can invest time and money to address consistent social problems pertaining to community supports.

4.1.3 Wellbeing. Often overlooked, food supply is an extremely influential factor in promoting attendance and well-being. Every participant expressed their satisfaction, gratitude, and the personal impact food availability at SKETCH has had on them. Responses collected were as simple as "I get really emotional about the food" to things such as the meals contributing to the most nutritional aspect of their weekly food consumption. Community efforts in Toronto to provide nutritional needs for homeless and marginalized youth have increased among social services agencies and organizations. Through their interviews with homeless youth in Toronto, Gaetz, Tarasuk, Dachner, and Kirkpatrick (2006) highlight the importance of these resources in the face of policy changes that negatively impact access to basic needs. Consistent with the goals associated with providing free meals at SKETCH, Gaetz et al. (2006) found that food may be offered in combination with other services and programs, "possibly because workers see hunger as an impediment to individuals' full participation in other activities or because providing free food is a means to draw in 'hard to reach' individuals" (p. 46). In my time at SKETCH, I learned about the reality of both of these barriers with regards to fostering healthy participation at SKETCH and drawing in new participants who would not attend if there was no food. Offering meals was an essential part of creating an environment of active engagement and a population of resilient youth attendees.

Beyond food, arts practice was expressed as a positive influence on well-being. For many, art was their own form of self-care, internal management, and managing stressful situations. Participants explained:

Music, is a huge part in dealing with how I feel. Art, performing is big. Performing's a big big thing. Being creative and writing my music is a big big thing. Basically anything that's not self-destructive. That I definitely seek first.

Another stated:

It's made me more aware of myself. It's 100% because I'm being productive and because my aspirations and goals are very tangible now as opposed to before. It really helps me prioritize my health or, well my health is my wellbeing.

Participants felt that involvement in their own arts practices at SKETCH was a primary method of engaging in self-care. The experience for trans youth at SKETCH has been a generally positive one based on the conversations had with one trans participant and his experience with other trans youth in the space, especially regarding self-care. It is important to hear from a diverse group of people to adequately represent the experience of young people in Toronto. This participant stated:

Well, SKETCH is my self-care. I come into this space. IT's a safe space, I'm not at home. I hate being at home. I'm terrified of going home. That's why I carry mace in my pocket. I'd only come home like sneak in the back door at night. And even then that's not safe. I have to wait near my house within eyeshot but with like, still hidden, and check if the space is clear for me to run and with a three year old who doesn't understand that violence is happening – she's like daaaddy

– shhh! Shut up! We can't let them know we're here. She doesn't understand that.

So obviously being here is way better than that because if something bad does

happen I have someone to talk to and say like listen, I'm terrified for my life right

now, listen to me, you know. I'm really sad this place is shutting down for a few

weeks. It's like the worst few weeks to shut down, it's like guys no, I need you.

It is clear that for some, SKETCH is seen as a safe space to pass the time and utilize

supports that would not be available elsewhere. Based on this participant's response and

personal experience, the availability of spaces like SKETCH is crucial to wellbeing, and

can be problematic when closed or unavailable. SKETCH takes an administrative break

between 10-week program sessions which makes it inaccessible to youth.

4.2 Education/Training and Professional Development

Two different conversations emerged regarding education. The first type of

discussion was a response to what current and previous education and training

participants have had, through formal and informal institutions. A second conversation

emerged to explain the struggles and negative experiences that some participants had

with the education system in public school or post-secondary. Within this section and into

the community and connections section, I highlight the conversation topics regarding

what types of training and education participants have accessed, along with their

reflections on careers and professional development. I also begin to present the broader

impact of standardized education on the youth that attend SKETCH.

4.2.1 Education and training. Not all participants discussed their level of

education, but a minimum of 6 participants had either completed a diploma or degree, or

attended any length of time in a post-secondary setting. Most of these programs were arts-focused and SKETCH either supplemented their education, or encouraged their choice of program. SKETCH is a place that can be used to build a portfolio to apply to school and for jobs, as one participant did who was in the cooking program at SKETCH, cooking meals for attendees on a regular basis. She planned to utilize what she learned cooking at SKETCH to assist with finding a job. This young woman was inspired by SKETCH along with her love of art and cooking to apply to multiple college programs over the course of a few years. First she decided to attend Sheridan following her introduction to SKETCH. Later, she attended George Brown for culinary, as discussed in the "Connections" section below. She states:

> *When I was at SKETCH I saw a lot of people doing a lot of art and practicing their art and I thought it was really great and I envied that a bit because I didn't practice a lot of finding myself through the arts too much in high school. After sketch was done and I had moved out in a boarding home I thought it would be a chance to go to Sheridan in Oakville and learn art fundamentals.*

Even for those who did not use SKETCH as a referral for school or to supplement their education, some individuals found SKETCH alone to be an alternative education experience. Other training and workshop opportunities were available through SKETCH or through a connection to SKETCH. One focus group participant received a recommendation from a SKETCH program coordinator to attend the Canadian Music Incubator Artist Entrepreneurship Program. The cost of this program was fully covered, as she explains:

It was funded by the city of Toronto so I didn't have to pay 7000 dollars and so I did that for free and it helped me a lot with my performance and they teach you about music business ... touring, finances, your royalties, how to tidy yourselves when you appear on a TV show, stuff like that. And I can always go back to them if I have like contracts that need to be read which you usually do with any like lawyers or whatever so that was a big help. CBC interviewed me through this performance here too and played my song on the radio so that's cool.

4.2.2 Impact of education. While there have been positive outcomes surrounding further education and training to attain goals and skills, the education system has had a negative or alternative impact on some of the youth engaged at SKETCH. Some of the youth that I spoke with diverged into a personal narrative which highlighted the societal and institutional inhibitors that caused conflict or challenges in their life course. Four participants provided a narrative account of their experiences (as opposed to short and concise responses to questions), and two of them emphasized their interaction with the education system. The variations in educational experiences and other background descriptors among participants allowed me to infer that young people may exhibit different push and pull factors that draw them to (and from) community programming. One participant told his story from this perspective:

I was six years old and I wanted to be an artist because I liked it so much. I kept drawing superheroes and I was like yo this is what I was supposed to be doing. Elementary and high school kinda blinds you from that, so I was like shit I don't know what to do with my life. And then after high school some of my friends

showed me that they sold paintings and I was like "what?!" you can do that? So uh just embraced that. It's like yo I'm supposed to be an artist so I'm gonna be an artist.

And I'm not good at anything else because I've been a failure most of my life. Cause I used to get like D's on my report cards all the time, cause I'm not interested in anything in school. I would always doodle on my stuff, so uh art was kind of speaking to me the whole time and I wasn't paying attention. Yeah like that's why I chose art, I'm not good at anything else and it's like my calling. And I'm very good at art.

The same participant regarding high school:

It blinds you, it's like oh you're supposed to be an electrician or a manager somewhere, like you gotta go to university for a lawyer or something. It made me feel stupid, that's what school did. And I thought I was stupid, until I started making art professionally. It's like whoa I'm actually fucking smart as fuck! Oh, I'm a genius!

Another participant had a similar story and perception of the education system, but he decided to attend university despite his reservations:

I was always making music…it's something that it was just instilled in me from a very young age so I was always; music was just something that never left me so it wasn't even like there was something that happened that made me want to do music it was always, yeah it's always been a part of my life, and just growing up with it, it just felt like a very natural thing to do but then when you get into the

school system especially when you, when you're older it's kind of,… it starts becoming less relevant only because you stop hearing it in discussion,… you don't hear your educators tell you, talk to you about music as a career or arts as a profession, so the less you hear about it the more you forget about it, so I would say in high school I started forgetting about music but what made me, decide like yeah music is what I like need to do was after years of being unsuccessful in the school system and then finding a reason to finish all of my goals, my academic goals, and arts was the reason.

The whole university setting was just not working for me, it did not click with me, it didn't resonate with me at all so I was like, "You know what? Screw it I'm not coming back", the fees where just ridiculous when it came to money, I'm still paying them off that's for one year that I'm still paying off and it's just a combination of my life circumstance made me leave school and then music came about, out of that situation, so I would say that moment in my life when I was about nineteen, twenty that's, nineteen twenty, I was like "yeah, I'm going to do music".

This individual expressed how the institutional structure was a source of impediment when trying to decide how to pursue a career in music, as it would appear that there is not one succinct path to follow to reach goals related to a career in music. Similar to, but slightly different from the participant above, one individual completed her undergraduate degree, although she was unsure where it would take her and if her schooling was actually benefitting her. She chose to continue working in the same part-time position she

held during university, taking on more hours after graduation when possible, simultaneously pursuing her craft through the help of SKETCH. The following comment is a reflection of her experience balancing being a student and being an artist:

> *I've always been in school for almost all my life just to kinda keep my parents happy. But also just to have some sense of peace with everything - work and trying to find myself as an artist. And I'm battling the kinda capitalist system of being an artist so SKETCH has been that stepping stone for me. To see that it's possible to not be in that institutionalized form of living.*

Education as a social institution provided ample discussion for personal narratives to emerge. Although some expressed positive, and more expressed negative experiences with formal education, many participants considered SKETCH an alternative form of education.

4.2.3 Professional development. To develop a craft professionally, it takes a great deal of time and commitment. There is a spectrum upon which participants can be characterized based on their level of commitment and investment in the arts. There are those who engage in arts practice recreationally, without intention to develop their work professionally; those who like the idea of developing their work professionally but have not yet reached that stage in their life; and those who are actively developing their career as an artist. Some of the following responses demonstrate the ways in which various participants value their own arts practice. A musician who intends to make music his career states:

There's a certain point you have to get to when you're like, okay, this is really

fun, but I'm serious about having fun. You know, you can't be not serious about

having fun. It's kind of a weird concept to grasp but you have to be serious about

having fun. And that's what SKETCH has helped me to do.

A young woman who facilitates arts programming in a health setting part-time but also

wants to pursue her own arts practice without having to resort to a regular 9-5 job one

day states:

It's nice to know that people want to genuinely help and share what knowledge

they have and I don't have to hustle to look for it. Like the internet's there but if

you don't know where to look, it can be very overwhelming and very exhausting

to the point where often times I'll feel like I need to just resort to a regular 9-5 job

which I really don't want to but SKETCH has always been that reminder that hey

you can do this big idea that you want to do and you have all the resources that

we can help you get there

From another career perspective, a young woman living in social housing who struggled

to find stable employment and sought to determine where her skills would best lend to a

stable employment opportunity was able to utilized two new skill sets that she learned

and practiced through SKETCH. SKETCH provided her an opportunity to refine her

skills in art and cooking, pursue further education in those areas, and then allow her to

have a platform to work and practice her crafts until she could find stable employment.

The differences in personal situations and commitment to an arts practice allows for the formulation of typologies for the young people who access community arts programming and have different goals and backgrounds.

Professional development opportunities came up frequently in conversation. Prior to conducting any interviews, I was aware that SKETCH offered workshops that taught topics such as marketing yourself as an artist and grant writing skills. It was not until I had a chance to sit down and speak with some of the youth that I understood more about these workshops and some of the grants that were available. The workshop most frequently offered and discussed was Art Hustle:

> *That was a workshop that SKETCH had, it's called Art Hustle. Yeah, how to get your portfolio running and together, which was great, you know, photographing, building your reputation on social media, showing your process on how you make your artwork. I thought that was very strong.*

I also had a chance to hear about some of the grants that SKETCH attendees were applying for with the help of SKETCH to develop grant applications:

> *I am applying for a grant that's due in May. It's through Ontario Arts Council. It's an access and career development grant so I'm applying for, I think, 11K to continue working on my one man solo show and then also possibly exploring and creating a new work. And mentoring with well established artists in the community.*

For some individuals, SKETCH supports their current career environments, specifically for those who have had a consistent public service career either full time or

part time while they have been pursuing post-secondary education. Some examples include working in an arts program for special needs individuals at a hospital, working with youth as a counsellor and facilitator at the YMCA, and working with a company that trains not-for-profit organizations just like SKETCH. Their experiences demonstrate the need for arts programming in other capacities within the community, for example, in relation to the work within the hospital:

> *This year has reaffirmed my practice in terms of special needs and art. And how there is a very big need for it outside of the hospital I've worked in…I'm still here because there's still parents that are asking for this type of programming and how do we continue to create quality programming for these individuals for a long term rather than a short term, because right now it's not run, there's no art management line. It's someone else that has no artistic background, and that's kinda been my struggle of understanding organizations. Sketch is a great example of how an art program-run organization should run in terms of creating quality programming.*

On a different level, organizations such as SKETCH help to foster skills that post-secondary environments do not provide, such as grant writing and one-on-one mentoring. The same participant stated:

> *To say that I don't know how to write a grant coming out of art school it's very intimidating as an artist to feel okay what did I just learn this four years and paying thousands of bucks for going to school and still being broke as fuck. But*

still wanting to do this practice it's because I wasn't connected with the right

resources for wherever I wanted to go.

As she clarifies later on, although similar resources may or may not be available within post-secondary institutions, the way that it is presented through SKETCH is very accessible in a way that the language is inclusive for anyone who wants to learn.

It is not realistic to consider some community organizations as a completely separate entity from the professional workforce, but rather, they are resources that link varying skills acquisition directly to a range of professional careers or job requirements. An example of this comes from the hospital work this same young woman does:

At the hospital I'm working at right now I'm kind of project lead for the art installation they want installed in the hospital so SKETCH has been kind of like my mom right now to tell me okay this is how you should be presenting yourself as an artist to people that might not have a background in art. This is the type of language you should be talking to people that are executive and CEO's….in reality it's really really hard to support your practice without spaces like SKETCH.

A critical piece of information was provided by a participant who also participated in a follow-up interview, one that addressed an issue that many young people face while in school and working. The cycle associated with finding work and preparing yourself for the workforce is influenced by how one invests their time elsewhere. Volunteer work is often highly valued on work applications and in association with networking and the development of skills that transfer to the workforce. Despite this, the

need for money is far more likely to be prioritized over committing time to volunteer activities. This individual stated: "*No, I can't volunteer, time is money right now. Like if I volunteer, I might as well live on the streets. Cause I don't make any money.*" If young people are missing out on opportunities to gain the experience necessary for a particular career choice, the alternative may be unskilled, minimum wage labour with little room for career advancement, and/or rough forms of living. SKETCH is an organization that demonstrates a platform that allows youth to volunteer their time and gain access to valuable resources such as work opportunities, workshops, and networking pertinent to their sought out profession.

Furthermore, access to technology is a critical element to social and economic success for many young adults. The use of technology and its impact has been studied from a well-being standpoint, with concerns regarding the harmful nature of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (O'Neal Coleman, Hale, Cotton, and Gibson, 2015). In academia, studies suggest that extended periods of internet use increase feelings of depression, hopelessness, and lowered self-esteem (O'Neal Coleman et al., 2015), but despite these implications, the utility of the internet and ICT's is crucial in professional and personal development efforts of young adults. This includes job searches, networking, media marketing, entrepreneurial efforts, and much more. The emphasis on access to technology in a community setting was highlighted in a number of passages provided through these interviews and focus groups. Youth had access to laptops, digital cameras, computers for music production software and soundboards, and this was something very valuable that I observed in the space. Access to technology is so

important for production and professional advancement that when certain programs or access to devices were missing, participants noted this disadvantage:

It's intimidating when you want to learn how to, especially with tech stuff, tech stuff is like really really intimidating and confusing. And it often is like a place where there's a lot of access barriers. You don't have a laptop, you don't have the right laptop, you don't have the updated version, you know all these different things. So like a lot of the hard skills we're mentioning I really want us to have had the time to learn and I think another thing was when I would book a laptop I assumed that like those programs were on it, but they weren't right.

Another participant stated:

I mean for video work it would have been great to have another camera on hand, I know there was one, just one camera. And laptops was a big one, I know there was what, 20 something indie studio residents and I think 7 laptops so yeah and I'm pretty sure a lot of people wanted a laptop.

Regardless of access barriers, cameras and laptops were still a positive addition to programming:

It's been great because sketch has a camera and has laptops and I haven't had a camera for I'd say the past three years because it just broke and I haven't been able to buy another one and it's been great to just, even if it's not the best quality camera, I mean it's still pushing me to start from the basics.

Finally, it seems like access to Ableton was a great contribution to the space, but some

participants indicated that instruction on how to use Ableton was not well done, which is

a point of performance improvement for SKETCH. One participant stated:

> *I've been to Sonic Lab, and that is a great program. You're trying to tell me that I*
>
> *can come somewhere twice a week and learn to use Ableton for free? That's*
>
> *crazy.*

4.3 Community and Connections

An extension of the education and training section, connections to education and

other training opportunities are an apparent product of participating and interacting at

SKETCH. One participant volunteered in the kitchen at SKETCH and was influenced to

take the culinary program at George Brown College, but would not have made this

connection without SKETCH:

> *I went through SKETCH, I volunteered at the daily bread food bank that year,*
>
> *also I went to the YMCA and I thought I wanted to challenge myself more so I*
>
> *went to the George Brown program. And SKETCH has professed that there had*
>
> *been some people that really loved the program so I really wanted to go out there*
>
> *and try it. And they gave me a great reference, because it's hard to get into that*
>
> *program. It's like a referral and a reference because I had worked with them, I*
>
> *had volunteered with them; they were a great support for me. I don't know who*
>
> *would have been a good reference than they.*

Although SKETCH connects young people to a number of resources throughout Toronto,

other agencies and organizations provide this type of support in kind by referring youth to

SKETCH for their programming. The young woman who made the statement above had been referred to SKETCH by an employment program called Young Street Mission. Through this employment program, this young woman secured an 8 month internship working for SKETCH as an office assistant. She continued participating in SKETCH programming after her internship had ended, but felt as though she lacked the skills necessary to gain further employment.

The primary form of connections and access to other community resources is often found through the networking and support systems offered at SKETCH. Participants reported frequent opportunities for things such as performing and vending independently through the connections they made at SKETCH. Examples included performance requests at events as a result of seeing artists perform at SKETCH, the Canadian music incubator artist entrepreneurship program, and radio spots and television interviews.

> *Since I've come to SKETCH, I've gotten a bunch more opportunities (for performing/vending), and through the connections that I'm making, I'm confident that I'm going to have more opportunities in the future. Making money through art is a big thing; it's really hard because everyone just wants you to do stuff for free, which is really shitty. Why should art be the only thing when everything else in the world is like, "oh yeah, that's a legitimate field, of course you deserve to get paid," but when it comes to art everybody is like, "oh, it's just art, whatever." I guess people think of art as more of a hobby and less as a career*

An organization that can connect skills acquisition to attainable forms of revenue, along with supports like referrals, networking, and workshops, is a time investment that yields results greater than positive time use alone.

4.4 Centre for Indigenous Theatre Participants

Two participants were not regular SKETCH attendee's and were given the option to participate in an interview as students from the Centre for Indigenous Theatre (CIT). The Centre for Indigenous Theatre runs out of the same location as SKETCH, Artscape Youngplace, and shares some connections and resources with SKETCH. For example, SKETCH provides lunch for the CIT students twice a week. For this lunch, CIT offers SKETCH a donation of four dollars per plate. Students are often invited to participate in workshops and other events that SKETCH offers, but the two participants expressed that they are busy enough with their classes that they do not attend SKETCH programming. Alternatively, some CIT students do not know about the programming offered at SKETCH, as I was told by interviewees. The students' Native Bands helped to provide them with funding for their program, and CIT provides much of the rest, such as rent for accommodation and grocery allowances. The students tend to live in Native Housing or share a residence with other CIT students during their time in school but prior to that, both participants travelled from other provinces in Canada to attend CIT. The program is open to Indigenous youth, but the program is not widely recognized, considering their small cohorts of students, and high dropout rate.

Before interviewing these two students, I did not realize how small the affiliation between SKETCH and CIT actually was, but upon engaging in the interviews, I was very

interested to hear their stories and experiences. I found it very encouraging that a training opportunity such as the one through CIT was available, especially a well-funded one that took in youth from all over the country. The students were being taught about theatre and performance from a cultural perspective that allowed them to connect to their own history and cultural roots. Dion and Salamanca (2014) point out that Indigenous youth in Canada are attending schools that are "structured by non-Indigenous ways of knowing and being" and Indigenous students are "immersed in the task of identity construction and do so within a system that fails to provide a space for Indigenous self-representation" (p. 166). Both of these CIT students experienced a mainstream Canadian high school education, but this post-secondary experience is far more culturally grounded.

Although separate from SKETCH, the importance of arts training opportunities and programming is demonstrated through some of the personal experiences that these two indigenous youth have described in their interviews. For Native youth who seek to embrace artistic expression and attain personal development through skills acquisition, affirmations of identity, and support, CIT and SKETCH provide paramount support for personal and professional attainment. One CIT participant described the impact of one of his first experiences with the arts:

> *Growing up as a two-spirited individual on a reserve is, it's kinda frowned upon, right. You're not allowed to be gay, or ew he's gay kinda thing and I was very bullied as I was growing up, to where I didn't want to go to school anymore. However, it was my grade 10 year that the school was running this drama program for the elementary students and I was like wow that's so cool I want to*

try it out. So they hired me to be a mentor behind the arts. I was like yeah this is

what I want to do. I'm allowed to be me for once. I'm allowed to be, you know

quirky I'm allowed to be outgoing and rambunctious, I'm allowed to wear purple

without you know, that judgement, so I think that the whole story is just really

self-identifying with my sexuality and finding space where I actually belonged.

Similarly, in a more recent experience, the second CIT participant expressed her positive grasp of self-concept, obtained through her work at CIT:

Today we were doing traditional singing and it definitely made me feel better, and

felt connected to my culture. Yeah for when I do scenes and stuff it gets easier to

just like push away all the bad stuff and just focus on being in the scene.

This second participant was a female who was quite shy and soft-spoken, but spoke positively about how the arts has allowed her to come out of her shell and try things that she would never have done before coming into the program. This young woman and the male participant spoke about overcoming personal setbacks to eventually be successful in their crafts which they were only just building knowledge about. These students had not had much opportunity to exercise their practice in a professional capacity, but their discussion of goal setting made clear their intentions of pursuing professional artistic careers in the future. Both participants held their arts practice in high esteem as being one of the main facilitators for expressing themselves and breaking away from negative life circumstances.

Both students suggested that they would like someone to talk to about the things going on in their lives and the issues they face. Ideally this would be someone outside of

CIT that they would not typically deal with on a regular basis, considering that the one counsellor they have access to is constantly busy. Support with mental health appears to be an overarching theme among CIT students and SKETCH participants and reflects the need for conversation regarding increased funding for mental health supports in any community or arts setting. Professional help can be intimidating for young people, and even a deterrent to seek help, therefore it is important to assess what is a realistic support to offer in traumatic and emotionally vexing situations. A non-biased listener is often enough. One participant stated:

> *I think what needs to happen is that they need to have someone on the side with SKETCH and CIT to have a counsellor waiting if like there's an at-risk youth of emotional trauma, suicidal thoughts whatever it is that's something that you could just turn to, just to know that that person is there waiting if you ever for whatever reason you need them to be there for. Sometimes I feel that I just I don't like to go to a counsellor because it's like they're – it's very technical. That's why sometimes I just feel the need to talk and talking right now with you is so helpful for me.*

As difficult as it might be to remain unbiased as a researcher while interacting with research participants, it is also rewarding to know that despite your position, you are proving a positive outlet for some of the individuals seen throughout the process. Although I gained little insight into the perceptions or impact of SKETCH from these two individuals, I found that being a positive outlet was the main benefit for CIT participants. The interviews themselves allowed for a place of reflection for the participants. They

could openly speak about how they deal with their emotions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Their theatre program consists of such a tight-knit community, beyond that they were generally happy to have a fresh face to discuss their experiences with. Their experiences in the CIT program demonstrate the importance of funding educational opportunities for career advancement in the arts,

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The theory of change presented by SKETCH initiates a process of categorizing individuals based on their goals and needs when they begin accessing SKETCH. Goals can range anywhere from basic skill enhancement for leisurely purposes, to marketing oneself for the purposes of professional development in the arts. The theory of change provides an outline that aligns outcomes with participant engagement. From a sociological perspective, parallels can be draw between the categories within the theory of change and certain typologies of individuals that specifically access community resources and programming. In order to develop criteria for these typologies, it would be most ideal to use concepts from a lifecourse framework to further contextualize participant narratives. Criteria can be built by observing certain social problems and their context within an individual's life. Their background and biographical narrative also illuminate how criterion for typologies can be developed from a community support standpoint. This type of thinking can support future development in shaping services that support young people who are marginalized or at risk of homelessness, especially in urban centers such as Toronto.

Lifecourse perspective is used to provide a backdrop for discussion on how young people can be categorized based on their life experiences and levels of engagement in community services. Subsequently, these categories may lend assistance to other community service providers by identifying differences in youth service users in order to provide better support. In the last section of this paper, I discuss my own reflections on the process and the methodological implications of this research. Through my experience

during the research process, and the field notes gathered, a foundation is presented to explain why an enthnonarrative research design is best suited for future research in community-based organizations or settings.

5.1 Lifecourse Perspective

Social problems occur throughout all stages of life and can be classified based on how they impact groups of people within society. Social problems exist as a product of perceived harm on a substantial number of people or society as a whole (Lopata & Levy, 2003). Homelessness is a broad social problem that impacts people across the life course, but can be studied in a narrow context such as among youth, those with mental health problems, drug users, or seniors, to name a few. For many youth and young adults, life stressors along with other circumstantial life processes and events contribute to the social problem of homelessness and the social problems exacerbated by marginalization.

Before applying a lifecourse perspective to these specific social problems, it is important to have a sense of understanding of how widespread a lifecourse perspective can be applied. As Lopata and Levy (2003) note, "the life course generally refers to the interweave of age-graded trajectories, such as work careers and family pathways, that are subject to changing conditions and future options, and to short-term transitions" (p. 5). Age-graded trajectories are fundamentally socially constructed, but advised by the human biological framework that suggests what we know to be age of maturity, reproduction, and other age-graded functions. These trajectories often dictate how we view success in life by following an expected path adorned with age-related achievements. These achievements in the forms of events, passages, or turning points are reinforced by

"society's institutionally enforced system of age-grading" (Lopata & Levy, 2003, p. 5).

Not following this path nor reaching certain achievements in life can cause feelings of stress and mental anguish, or other negative cognitive side effects. These negative feelings are increasingly prominent among today's young adults whose chosen paths do not follow what is considered to be a societal standard for life trajectories.

Lifecourse is often studied in the context of aging but can be applied across all populations, depending on the desired outcome of research and the assessment of the interplay between life factors and social conditions. As the term implies, lifecourse studies take a biographical focus on conditions over the lifecourse that influence social problems and society as a whole (Cooke, 2009). Lifecourse studies can help to inform policy research and implementation as a framework rather than a theory, which is better positioning for practical applications. Lifecourse can be considered for viewing inequality and disadvantage in society (Cooke, 2009). The benefits of utilizing this perspective include predicting conditions later in life that are a result of early experiences in life, and subsequently developing policies that influence supports for the conditions of inequality and disadvantage (Cooke, 2009). Conditions that may predict or correlate with youth homelessness can be viewed from a lifecourse perspective.

Based on the results of the current study, especially those regarding employment, health, family, and community, we can begin to gather a broader understanding of the conditions that young people face that carry over across the lifecourse. The results demonstrated that there were some similarities between the backgrounds of participants, such as previously living with adoptive or extended family, unstable family life, negative

experiences with the education system, and precarious employment. In addition, many participants felt some sort of stress for not accomplishing benchmarks in their life that they believed were expected of them. It seemed as though SKETCH helped them come to terms with this by being a resource and outlet for new skills development. The narrative element illustrated through some of the responses gathered allowed for participants to make their own life course distinctions apparent, especially through acceptance and rejection of typical education and career benchmarks. Analyzing these factors with some lifecourse considerations assists in developing the three typologies outlined in the following section.

5.2 Participant typologies

Participant typologies began to emerge as the interview data and observations revealed repeat characteristics among participants. Suggested typologies are not purposed around formally categorizing individuals, but rather to identify characteristics prominent among groups of individuals that participate in community organizations. Drawing attention to characteristics and looking at them through a lifecourse perspective may allow for appropriate input to be made into the allocation of supports based on levels of need. This need could vary based on social and economic differences suggested across typology groups.

Based on the responses from focus groups and interviews, one method for determining what stage within the theory of change participants are in, was how they explain their relationships and interactions with SKETCH staff members. There are 6-7 SKETCH staff and facilitators who work directly with the youth attending programming

and it is apparent how their direct influence assists in refining skills and platforming artists to a professional level. Participants who expressed that they had a stronger, collaborative, or more frequent connection with certain staff members tended to be on the arts incubator or platform (higher advancement) spectrum of the theory of change. Those who participated in the arts engage category of the theory of change tended to have a less frequent relationship with facilitators and attended less consistently. For a refresher on the elements of the Theory of Change, see Figure 1. The characteristics I will describe here will be linked to the types of individuals that I encountered at SKETCH along with their style of participation at the organization. More generalizable characteristics of these individuals will be applicable to a wider range of young people that access community programing and services.

5.2.1 Type 1. The first typological group is associated with the arts engage category of the theory of change. We will refer to this group as type 1 individuals. Type 1 participants seem to be casual or infrequent service users. They utilize community services for the free resources and engagement they provide. At SKETCH, they have often heard about the organization through word of mouth or referral from another service, like many other participants. At this level, youth are accessing new connections, meals and snacks, and learning about the possibilities available through the organization. Through SKETCH, youth learn about the types of arts and creative activities that they can engage in, and subsequently explore the options available through programming. These participants may attend SKETCH from time to time simply to access food or to have a place to go to pass the time and meet new people. Lunch and dinner start before programming begins at SKETCH, and often there are 1-2 groups of individuals seated

that hangout and eat but do not necessarily participate in arts activities during their stay. These individuals contribute to the overall vibe of the space and the feeling that it is social and upbeat.

This level of participation contributes to individual wellbeing and personal development, with particular emphasis on acquiring a range of new skills through arts programming. Professional development is either not important or immediately apparent for these participants. Some arts engage participants may have been attending SKETCH for a long period of time, but possibly inconsistently, or without committing to a deeper development of a specific craft. Alternatively, these could be youth that have only showed up once or twice. They may seek out additional opportunities or resources when they are in the space, and might live rough due to personal circumstances. Type 1 individuals identified through the arts engage category appear to be those who access community resources inconsistently or in times of need due to transient lifestyles. I met a few individuals during my time with the organization who attended infrequently enough to not be able to participant in an interview. I also met individuals who have attended for a long time and with a better understanding of their circumstances, could be categorized in the next type (type 2), but did not seem to have a deep connection to the arts. From a lifecourse perspective, type 1 individuals are those that utilize community resources due to circumstances that have persisted across their life such as poverty, housing instability/homelessness, or cultural marginalization. These individuals need community resources to meet their basic human needs, engage in positive time use, and develop skills.

5.2.2 Type 2. The second group is associated with the arts incubate category of the theory of change. Type 2 individuals acquire new skills, generate ideas for their own work, and connect with the community while at SKETCH. Typically they have been with the organization for a longer period of time, or alternatively, a shorter period of time but have decided to make some sort of commitment to expanding their skills and connections. At this stage, programming at SKETCH allows for the introduction of new supports and skill acquisition to individuals who either wanted to better their craft or learn how to market themselves as artists. These individuals are likely to attend more workshops and seek out opportunities in the community, along with learning from fellow youth.

In the studio space and within interviews, I found that these individuals were long-time SKETCH attendees who worked on small and varying projects at a time, but were not yet in a position to seek out or platform to professional development. They had many ideas and goals that they wanted to pursue, but no long-term plan. These individuals seemed committed to continuing their arts practice, but housing and employment was known to have been unstable in their lives. I would consider the Centre for Indigenous Theatre students that I interviewed to be a part of this group, as they had committed to their schooling, but were still trying to determine their future path and relationship with the arts. Type 2 individuals may be those who find art interjected into their lives later in life, and have acquired a passion for an arts practice through new experiences. Outside of arts practices and SKETCH participants, type 2 youth who access other community services may have similar backgrounds to those seen within SKETCH, but they may be seeking support during a turning point in their life such as career change/exploration,

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networking, or skill development. These individuals may come from a marginalized or troubled background, but are more likely to have stable, if not transient, housing during their time accessing services.

5.2.3 Type 3. The third group is associated with the arts platform category of the theory of change. Type 3 individuals have specific goals or projects in mind that they intend to work on through the resources offered at SKETCH. They may have already established a small or growing client/fan/audience base and intend to pursue their craft as a career. From my experience in the studio space and conducting interviews, many of the youth that would be considered at the arts platform stage of the theory of change were participants in the Indie Studio program. Indie Studio requires that youth apply for the program and that they have a project idea that they come up with or take on during their concentrated time in the space. They are allowed to use music/art/dance studios to themselves and receive more one-on-one mentoring compared to usual programming. Examples of projects included screen printing shirts with designs made by an individual who could then sell them, recording singles, a vlog series, and preparation for a project that would extend to other youth outside of SKETCH.

Many participants in this group and even in the type 2 group have had experiences with post-secondary education either successfully, propelling their goals, or discouragingly, which has influenced them to pursue other avenues, including their arts practice. This group of individuals that access community services are those who have reached certain life trajectories that those in the first two groups may not have. These individuals may have more familial or other supports in their lives which allow them to

invest more time in education and skills development. The most common trajectories that these individuals have met are educational, such as completing or almost completing high school and/or college/university; living in a stable home with family and/or successfully moving out alone or with roommates; and maintaining part-time or full-time employment. There may be individualized reasoning for why type 3 individuals need to or desire to access these services, such as a personal loss or change that has influenced them to seek out additional supports. The distinction between SKETCH and any other organization is that the reasoning for SKETCH participants to seek out supports is the pursuit of an ongoing or new career in the arts.

Although I have categorized these three groups as associated with the theory of change, youth from any background including ethnicity, education, and housing stability could fall within any of these categories. Commonly at SKETCH, I found that those with some formal education were more likely to be in the latter two groups. The significance of outlining these three groups involves the conceptualization of the differences in youth characteristics that access community services, along with the goals associated with their participation. It is important to consider the life events of youth that access community organizations and services because these events contribute to their goals, ability to pursue goals, and maintain forward momentum in their lives. Events that happen across the lifecourse, such as moving to a new country and starting a new life, family association or disassociation, educational attainment and more, are significant indicators that allow service providers to assess how youth in the community can be better served based on their needs and personal goals. As noted above, some youth face a great deal of instability in their life and the main form of support that they need is through nutrition,

social inclusion, and referrals to other fundamental resources. Other youth have more

stability in their life and work on making progress in areas of their life such as enhancing

their employability skills and learning new skills which may help them in the future.

Finally, some youth simply seek out the supports, resources, and connections that they

may not be able to find elsewhere, even though they have a significant amount of support

in their lives. An emphasis on understanding these typologies allows service providers in

community settings to develop and prepare protocols for service delivery which cater to

each type of individual that may access their services. This might include applying for

government funding to finance a refined level of services.

CHAPTER 6 REFLECTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Reflections on Participant Outcomes and Challenges

During the data collection process, follow-up interviews were conducted to gather an idea of how participant experiences changed over a short period of time. These interviews highlighted positive outcomes, as well as new challenges. Follow-up interviews were conducted with three participants at the end of the spring programming session, which was the second session I was present for. This took place approximately two and a half months after their initial interview. Of these follow-up interviews, one was done with an individual who took part in a one-on-one interview, and two were done with individuals who took part in the first focus group. I asked these participants to speak about how the topics we discussed prior have changed or developed since we last spoke. This section will provide insight into the demonstrated impact and time-related progress that a few participants experienced in the time that I was an observant fixture in the space.

One participant, who was very eager to further establish himself as a freelance artist, had completed a mural he was commissioned to do with other artists at SKETCH, and was communicating with art galleries to display and sell his work for a substantial amount. His work was also featured on the handouts that SKETCH created to advertise their upcoming sessions. He was being paid well for the work he had done most recently, which left him feeling much more confident about food, rent, and everyday living expenses. He was aware that for the future, things would not always be this stable: "*I feel like it will always be unstable because the artist path is a daredevil thing to do. They*

don't say in the package, oh you get 70k a year, nah, it's not like that." Without access to

community resources, this instability may produce unnecessary strain, especially for

someone pursuing freelance work in Toronto.

I was impressed by how humble many of the participants at SKETCH were,

including the previously mentioned freelance artist in particular, as he was keen to turn

all of his experiences into positive experiences. To provide an example, if he was feeling

down, he would put this emotion into his artwork, creating a theme reflected by colour

consistencies within a series of pieces. I was also inspired by the amount of learning and

production that takes place over the span of one session. Some of the major takeaways

included learning how to write grant proposals, learning about indigenous decolonization,

anti-oppression, creating business cards, works of art, and entrepreneurial opportunities

and projects.

Unfortunately not all participants experienced improvements in all aspects of their

daily life over the course of another program session at SKETCH. One participant who

originally participated in the first focus group, experienced instances of transphobic

behaviour towards them that had a negative influence on their personal wellbeing. One

experience was outside of the space, regarding their living arrangement, and the other

was experienced inside the space while working in a group that supported a different

research project that featured both SKETCH participants and outside participants.

Through connections made at SKETCH and other community platforms, there were

encouraging outcomes and possibilities that emerged regardless of the difficult

circumstances for this person:

I mean like this place has been a huge emotional support to me because I've been

able to come in and say I can't do anymore. It was really difficult for me to accept

that I wouldn't finish a lot of my art projects because of the stress I was under,

like I was trying to etch a mirror the other day and my hands were shaking too

much and I just had to put it down and say I can't I can't come back to this. I just

couldn't do it. And you know, what I really needed to hear was that that was okay

and a few of the coordinators did make that clear.

This individual was in the process of viewing new places to live, and had overcome loss

of employment after going through a human rights tribunal case for a different

transphobic issue with the manager at his workplace. On the road to stable housing and

stable employment, the support through SKETCH remained consistent. He was able to

participate in the research project that SKETCH was supporting, which was actually a

funded research project that offered participants payment for their time and contributions.

Through this, he had the opportunity to complete pieces of artwork and present his

spoken word piece in a radio interview with CBC. These were beneficial opportunities to

participate in during a difficult time in his life. The downside to his experience with the

other research project was that a fellow participant verbally and physically violated him

and his identity during a session. The issue was dealt with by those in management at

SKETCH and the other project facilitator, but I had a chance to speak with him in depth

about the issue. For a period of time he was worried that SKETCH was no longer the safe

and inclusive place it once was to him, but after a short while, he was more comfortable,

especially as the project ended.

The final follow-up participant had achieved a good deal of progress during her time at Indie Studio, but was challenged with a new opportunity at her workplace – the hospital offering arts programming - which provided her a full-time position over the summer. This change would be a challenge to go from working part-time to full-time 7:30am-5pm each day; a work lifestyle that she did not believe was necessary or ideal for everyone, and that would subsequently take away from her own personal arts practice. In addition to this opportunity, this participant had received a grant for her own pitch program proposal. She had also collaborated on a project with a fellow Indie Studio member, who also happened to be an interview participant, to create a video series documenting their time in Indie Studio. She stated:

> *I feel like just getting access to, or even seeing a space that provides workshops, free workshops for things that are very very very relevant to being successful – not just being successful as an artist, but how to survive as an artist. You have all these people that already know the hustle and they know the challenges, they know kinda the ins and outs of where to get that right funding from and they'll honestly tell you if you're doing something right or wrong in terms of getting those right people on board to support you. And yeah that's why I'm definitely proud of saying I'm a part of SKETCH.*

These follow up interviews provided a glimpse into the life, career, and leisure changes that some participants experienced from one season to the next. These follow up interviews do not provide enough of a longitudinal snapshot of change, but they do

provide insight into the types of opportunities and experiences had through association with SKETCH over time.

6.2 The direction of SKETCH: What it is and what it is not

SKETCH is a hybrid service provider in that it does not stick to just one specific model of skills development or amelioration, but in fact it offers multiple services and constantly aims to provide unique offerings. As a result of the fact that SKETCH is multifaceted as an organization, SKETCH is restricted in providing certain supports. Some participants discussed their desire for SKETCH to provide services or support that it could not due to the primary mandate of the organization. This is further discussed below with excerpts from the interview data to support it.

Upon discussing things that could be improved at SKETCH, many participants made valuable contributions and suggestions that the administrative team have and may take into consideration in the future. Additionally, comments were made that lie outside of the range of services that SKETCH can offer, and these were considered in the notes to follow. The following is an excerpt of a statement of suggestions from a participant:

> *I would say to actually help people's wellbeing further, having a proper housing and job worker on site all the time would be a fantastic thing because a lot of youth who come through here are street involved or have been street involved, under-housed, under-employed. There's all kinds of backgrounds, and having someone there who even just has a housing list available I think would be super helpful. Or like jobs that are friendly for sex workers, because a lot of us have a gap on our resumes…Having a worker aware of those needs. I've also met people*

through SKETCH who use drugs and that has its own challenges so having a

worker aware that we come from these different backgrounds but we still need

housing and work would be super helpful.

Among the positive and constructive conversations held as a result of this project, there was reflection on how programming could be improved to suit general and individual preferences. This encouraged discussion between the program associate and myself regarding what SKETCH as an organization can and cannot do. Suggestions for having things such as PSW's, counsellors, housing officers, and similar outside supports in the space were difficult to address considering the goals of the organization and the boundaries that they cannot or should not cross when it comes to offering support. The organization is ambitious to refine their ability to provide information and referrals for the best possible resources to those who access the space, but they do not stand as the primary providers of certain resources that address things like housing or mental health. Other services outside of SKETCH are mandated specifically to do this. This can be a difficult topic of conversation to clarify to the people who attend programming. People who attend SKETCH are not expected to be knowledgeable about what resources the organization is capable of providing, and I believe those specifications are still being defined by the organization over time. One participant stated: "*I find this place is really good at giving you numbers to call elsewhere, but they don't actually set things up for you.*" Although resources can always be added or enhanced, from an outsiders perspective, there is value in the organization's commitment to building upon what they already do best – which is provide inclusive and equitable opportunities through the arts to promote self-sufficiency and community engagement.

Alternatively, suggestions were provided to improve components of services that SKETCH already offer. These suggestions were made regarding things such as the artist mentorship program, organizing program sessions to be more efficient while making better use of time for new and seasoned participants, double bookings due to space restrictions, and teaching new areas of interest or presenting them in a way that has real world applicability. These suggestions were more tangible to refine what the organization is already doing, and could be presented to those with more executive power within the organization. The limitations addressed in discussion with program participants highlighted limited or missing resources which have the potential to increase positive outcomes of participation at SKETCH. Time is a consideration that is moderated by the skilled individuals who support and facilitate programming. With fewer facilitators and artists in the space to support the work that the youth do, a lack of time becomes an inhibitor to productivity and satisfaction of the participants. To support the productivity of the young people accessing SKETCH, and to support the expansion of programming and participation targets, SKETCH would need to employ more skilled artists and facilitators to reduce to time it takes to receive personalized support. These observations simply indicate the need for increased funding in order to operate at a level that effectively supports an increasing number of homeless and marginalized youth in the Toronto area; a goal many community-based organizations aim to achieve.

6.3 Methodological Implications

Due to the hybrid service nature of SKETCH, there are challenges to designing a systematic program evaluation. The organization was interested in collecting data that

would allow them to do program evaluation on the effectiveness of their services. However, difficulty lies in the fact that there are multiple services to be assessed which youth access differently (i.e. they may utilize any combination services, or one service alone). These services include free and healthy meals before or after program sessions, a variety of arts and skills-based programming, workshops, referrals, and advancement programs such as Indie Studio. Program evaluation often requires strict research protocols such as questionnaires and/or interviews/focus groups with an analysis to determine the effectiveness of a program (Rossi, Freeman, and Lipsey, 1999). In community settings with diverse populations and service users who access a range of unique program offerings, considering different combinations of methods may target better research outcomes than the methods set out in program evaluation alone. Indication was made at the beginning of this paper to suggest that the combination of methods used in an ethnonarrative design allows for ideal or optimal results in a community setting. In order to explore this notion and subsequently provide insight into how these methods were beneficial throughout the research process, I discuss how my choice of methods influenced that process. This included how information was gathered and knowledge was gained from multiple avenues and sources.

6.3.1 Why ethnonarrative in community settings? Demonstrated in much of the previously reviewed literature, it is common that within institutional, community, and/or organizational settings, one or more combinations of qualitative methods often yield rich results. These results tend to give a snapshot or a temporal view of certain outcomes or impact, efficiency of programs or initiatives, or perspective(s), depending on the goals of the research. In my experience as an outsider researcher, I came to a number of

conclusions regarding the best approach to community research in order to maximize the quality of the results gathered. This recommended approach suggests the use of three elements, including ethnography, participant observation, and interviews within the research design. Prior to being able to answer any of my own questions, I decided it would be best to spend an undetermined period of time engulfed in the organization to truly understand how I would position myself as a researcher and passive participant and observer. Thus, adequate research could not be conducted without beginning to bridge the gap or overcome the sense of dissonance felt when entering an unfamiliar research setting that one would like to make conclusions about. This was one of the first concerns that could be addressed by utilizing ethnography (i.e., understanding the culture of the organization). Gathering field notes and documenting experiences was also a key factor in being able to draw together the breadth and length of the experience in the research setting, which included participant observation. Sets of interviews conducted over a few months explored the culture of the organization directly from the perspective of the participants themselves. Building a semi-structured interview guide to allow for the intake of narrative responses was also ideal in this design.

There is a researcher dissonance associated with entering an established group or organization to conduct research. One might hold certain assumptions or beliefs about people or programs within an organization that are not adequately informed. Without adequate knowledge of the operations and procedures that dictate participation in any community organization, constructing questions and techniques for asking those questions becomes potentially damaging or misleading to the research study and the participants. Ethnographic research establishes a degree of fundamental knowledge on

the part of the researcher to construct narrative-building questions ideal for addressing the research question(s) and bearing in mind participant backgrounds and expectations. In order to do this, as previously mentioned, I spent a number of weeks meeting weekly with the program associate at the organization in order to ask questions, learn, and plan for the research ahead. This provided the opportunity to begin to understand the organization from an administrative and operational standpoint. Once I began my participant observation, during my volunteer hours in the space, I could combine the prerequisite knowledge gathered earlier in my meetings with the firsthand experience of the organization's daily functions.

Two indicators influenced this conclusion regarding dissonance. First, once I began meeting with the PA weekly, I realized that my expected research design had to change to suit the needs of the organization while still being able to answer my original research questions. Time, discussion, and planning allowed us to bridge the gap which caused the initial dissonance. Secondly, the decision to begin conducting research before having spent enough time in the space following these weekly meetings reinvigorated this researcher dissonance. This was made clear by having the first set of interviews and focus group occur before participant observation in the studio space. By this point, I had formulated an understanding of the organization, and reestablished the research design, but I had not yet familiarized myself with the population and interactions of the program participants within the space. The next round of interviews were better structured and more comfortable for myself and the participants once I was familiar with the space and the participants themselves. This demonstrates the benefit of following an ethnographic design with participant observation in community research settings to better comprehend

the sample population prior to beginning more formal research protocols such as interviews and focus groups.

The depth of information gathered through field notes contributes to elements of this paper that would not be addressed through interviews/focus groups alone. Conducting participant observation and writing field notes to follow that also helped bridge the gap created by being unfamiliar with the interactions in the space, the programming, and organizational processes. Participant observation not only allowed me to experience the programming that youth participants are involved in, but it also allowed me to provide support while I was in the space. This was followed by personal and written reflection in the form of field notes, which supported the structure of the results and discussion. The field notes documented my experiences from my initial contact and weekly meetings with the PA, to the end of my time volunteering at SKETCH.

Finally, in order to facilitate open-ended responses that could allow the results to illustrate more candid perspectives, a semi-structured interview guide for both one-on-one interviews and focus groups was beneficial. This type of interview guideline offered a guided discussion, while keeping the conversation open enough that participants could reflect and self-direct the discussion based on their personal experiences. The semi-structured nature of the interviews still provided an opportunity for individual narratives to come out, despite the fact that having to reestablish the research design at the beginning of the process took away from a full narrative building element. Due to varied personality types and levels of involvement at the organization, offering the option to do

a one-on-one interview versus a focus group catered to multiple interests, and subsequently led to more participation.

Having utilized these three elements, including the broader framework of ethnographic research, and participant observation as well as interviews and focus groups built into the design, results gathered were rich in detail and diverse. Diverse refers to the tangible research results obtained through the interview transcripts. These are then paired with the researcher's knowledge gained over several months, along with the administrative collaboration and field notes to supplement them. It is recommended that researchers use this combination of methods more often when entering into an organization to do program evaluation or outcome-targeted research as it allows them to better understand the setting and population for better informed results.

6.4 Limitations

A prominent limitation that arose in this study and within similar scholarship on engagement and resiliency initiatives is the limited reach and accessibility of these opportunities. With regards to the YouthScape grants, Blanchet-Cohen and Cook (2014) do not address the real possibility that youth who are even more marginalized may lack the resources to participate in the recruitment process for the opportunity to earn grants. Similarly, young people living on the margins in urban Toronto are most likely to hear about opportunities through word of mouth and referrals, but not all young people live with the same circumstances to gain referrals and/or take advantage of them. A number of SKETCH participants were not from the downtown Toronto core, which suggests that there may be less accessibility barriers for these individuals compared to those who

cannot access the space. The advantage that current SKETCH attendees have is that they already know that facilitators offer transit tokens for travel. A number of commuters were a part of the sample of youth who participated in an interview. There is an enormous population of youth in Toronto that would benefit from the services that SKETCH offers, and only a fraction of those that actually utilize them. Two participants stated:

> *I know so many people out there who are like "yeah, I'm really passionate about my art, but a) I don't have tokens and b) the bus ride is like an hour and a half, and I either have to work or do shit for my mom," and that's the reason that I'm not at SKETCH twice a week*

The other expressed:

> *I wish that sketch can get like a lot of funding. I feel the more funding they have, the more growth they will have and more opportunities they can gain. Lots of people can get that, get a part of that as well in the kinds of programs they can offer. So I'd wish that that can happen for them. I'd also hope that they can be well known, like I said I was hoping like a college or university can hear about sketch and try and fundraise*

As is commonplace with many qualitative studies, the question of sample size is often a limitation. The organization sees hundreds of young people in their space and participating in programming throughout the year, hence it is difficult to obtain a sample that is representative of the diversity of all that attend. The research design challenge mentioned earlier also became a limitation on the study, as one of the original goals of the research was to gather narratives of those involved in the organization. This narrative

building would allow us to better understand the backgrounds and personal narratives of participants, depicting a more longitudinal overview of the impact of SKETCH by comparing past to present. Unfortunately the questions had to be altered to suit the needs of the organization, and narratives had to come about organically without probing for specific details. Regardless, there was a great deal of data to draw from to support the study.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has sought to explore the outcomes of a unique arts-based programming initiative in a community setting geared towards youth and young adults who experience and face risks of homelessness and other forms of marginalization. SKETCH in Toronto provided that urban community setting which is a hub of services in a fast-paced, highly populated area within downtown Toronto. In seeking these outcomes, a guide has been provided that outlines characteristics of types of individuals that may access community services, and further still, which combination of research methods are best suited for this type of research setting. Outlining three typologies provides outsiders and other service providers a perspective on the backgrounds or prior life experiences of individuals who access services, and subsequently the subtle differences in how they access community services. This can be leveraged in the program planning stages by being able to anticipate how youth might interact with the services being offered, and to deliver services effectively for them. Finally, the recommendation to use an ethnonarrative research design, including ethnography, participant observation,

field notes, and interviews/focus groups with a narrative building component, was formulated based on the richness of the results gathered here and the broader understanding gained on the part of the researcher. Ethnonarrative can be used to inform theoretical inquiry through its variability in producing results that address problems and systematic understandings of the research target, including certain populations, organizations, or services. This can inform theoretical inquiry in relation to problems facing youth, and the broader operation of service organizations for marginalized populations. Further research should be done in community settings to present findings and gain a better understanding of the challenges and outcomes facing young people who utilize community services regularly. The results also made apparent that there is a need for conversation regarding increased funding for mental health supports and services in any community or arts setting. Overall, participation in arts practice supported positive mental well-being for the young people in this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus Group Interview Guide

I. Introduction:

- Greet respondents and introduce yourself as a placement student working with SKETCH on evaluation and a Master's Thesis – Amber Vibert. We are evaluating to get feedback from youth about what draws them to SKETCH, what works in our programs, where we can grow, etc, so we can create relevant, impactful, exciting, and inspiring programs. Hand out survey.
- Explain the purpose of the interview and gather informed consent.
- Introductions: Name, gender pronouns, top three connections @ SKETCH

II. Involvement at SKETCH - Discussion #1:

- What first brought you to SKETCH?
    - When was this? How old were you?
    - What programs did you first participate in?
    - Why did you choose those programs?
    - Is there a story or life event behind why you chose the arts, or SKETCH?
- How long have you been involved at SKETCH?
    - Has your involvement been consistent since you first started? If there have been gaps, for how long, and why?
- What program(s) are you involved in currently? (Determine what stage of ToC these are)

III. Artmaking 1: Atmosphere

- How would you describe the atmosphere at SKETCH?
    - Accessibility (food, transportation/location, daily needs)
    - "Vibe"/social vibe
    - Physical space
    - Inclusive?
    - Supportive?

IV. Artmaking 2: Happiness and Wellbeing

- How does coming to SKETCH impact your wellbeing and happiness?
    - Self-care

- o   Health and nutrition
- o   Motivation
- o   Social connections
- o   Managing stress and challenging circumstances
- o   Emotions and mental health

V.   Discussion #2

- What new skills have you acquired from being at SKETCH?
  - o   Hard: art-skills, better self-care, completing bodies of work, applying for grants, community engagement, entrepreneurship, marketing, resume/CV writing, portfolio, finances
  - o   Soft: social skills, self-starting/motivation, focus, employment skills, communication, problem solving, teamwork, maintaining artistic practice/commitment, community involvement, goal setting, professionalism, organization, reliable/accountable
  - o   Productivity in the arts
  - o   Completing bodies of work – discuss bodies of work

VI.   Artmaking 3: Connection to Opportunities

- Have you had any opportunities to expand your work through things such as exhibits, vending, publishing, or performing?
  - o   Vending, exhibits, publications, performances, public speaking, community programs, educational, making money
  - o   What have these experiences been like?
  - o   If none of the above, what would you like to do?

VII. Artmaking 4: Personal Connections

- Have you expanded personal connections through SKETCH?
  - o   Mentors
  - o   Friendships
  - o   Art world connections
  - o   Resources and referrals
  - o   Social circle
  - o   Community/Community projects
  - o   How does these connections impact your life? (support, positive/negative feedback, respect, etc.)

VIII. Artmaking 5: Goals

- What types of goals do you/have you set for yourself?
    - Artmaking
    - Career
    - Personal life
    - Impact on the world
    - Leadership
    - How can SKETCH support this? What can SKETCH do?

SKETCH Program Evaluation
Focus Group Survey

We appreciate your feedback! Answer the questions as honestly as you can. **Choosing to not take part in this survey will in no way affect your involvement with or your access to SKETCH resources.**

Confidentiality: It is important to us that your answers are kept confidential, so that you feel completely comfortable being honest. Your name will be stored separately from your answers, so that no one ever sees your name and your answers together. We share these in the form of averages and these summaries will be shared with our funders, community supporters, and other stakeholders, but always in summary form and never specific to you. Additionally, the answers to these questions will be posed as a summary of the information provided within a final paper and presentation.

1. What gender do you identify with? (check all that apply)
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Trans
   - ☐ Two-spirit/gender fluid/gender non-conforming
   - ☐ Other:_____

2. What is your age?

   _____

3. What's your ethnicity? (check all that apply)
   - ☐ African / Caribbean
   - ☐ European
   - ☐ South East Asian
   - ☐ Middle Eastern
   - ☐ Latin American
   - ☐ Asian
   - ☐ South Asian
   - ☐ Indigenous (includes First Nation, Inuit and Metis)
   - ☐ Newcomer
   - ☐ Other

4. How would you describe your current living condition?
   - ☐ Housed
   - ☐ Under-housed
   - ☐ Not housed

5. More specifically, what are your living circumstances like right now?
- ☐ Have an apartment with a lease
- ☐ Have an apartment but without a lease
- ☐ Staying at a shelter
- ☐ Couchsurfing
- ☐ Sleeping rough / outside
- ☐ Other/Describe:

_____

6. Please tell us about your living circumstances in the last year (select all that apply!)
- ☐ Had an apartment with a lease
- ☐ Had an apartment but without a lease
- ☐ Stayed at a shelter
- ☐ Couchsurfed
- ☐ Slept rough / outside
- ☐ Other/Describe:

_____

7. Have you ever experienced homelessness?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can you explain your experience?

_____

_____

8. Are you in school or a training program?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Level/Type: _____

9. Are you…
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Under-employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Self-employed

Describe:

_____

10. What's your sexual orientation?
- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Other: _____

11. How long have you been coming to SKETCH?
   - ☐ Less than 3 months
   - ☐ 3-6 months
   - ☐ 6-12 months
   - ☐ 1-2 years
   - ☐ 2-6 years
   - ☐ 6+ years

12. How often do you participate in SKETCH on average?
   - ☐ Several times a week
   - ☐ Once a week
   - ☐ Once a month
   - ☐ Once every few months
   - ☐ Never