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The Use of Forum Theatre as Therapy with At-risk Immigrant and Refugee Youth

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The Use of Forum Theatre as Therapy with At-risk Immigrant and Refugee Youth

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

How a youth experiences acculturation shapes the ability of immigrant and refugee youth to feel safe, included, and hopeful about their future. The purpose of this study is to deepen social workers' understanding about integrating forum theatre as therapy with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth by exploring insights that arose from youths' participation in forum theatre. To gain this understanding, this study was completed using the generic qualitative approach, interviewing six Calgary respondents about their time settling in Canada and about their participation in forum theatre. Findings suggest that forum theatre could be a useful intervention to generate dialogue and inspire personal or social change. Directions for future research include exploring gender constructions through forum theatre or investigating forum theatre as therapy within a social work setting or practice.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to the six wonderful participants who gave their time and shared their stories with me. Your strength and resiliency are inspirational, and your belief in the strengths of forum theatre inspired me to carry on.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces my qualitative research study with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth who participated in forum theatre. I present relevant statistical information about immigrants and refugees who live in Canada, as well as my background as a trained joker, that is, a facilitator of forum theatre. I also provide brief background information about *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), also known as forum theatre, and its roots in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1993). The purpose of the study is to investigate the impacts of forum theatre by exploring the youths' personal insights about their experiences in forum theatre. As such, I explore the following questions: What are the impacts, whether positive or negative, of forum theatre on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth? Could practitioners use forum theatre as therapy for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth?

1.1 Immigrant and Refugee Youth in Canada

According to the Census Report (2006) approximately 168 085 youth, ages 15 to 24, arrived in Canada between 2001 and Census Day, May 16, 2006. Statistics Canada's *National Household Survey* (2011) reported that approximately 1 162 900 people immigrated to Canada between 2006 and 2011 with 14.5 percent of them, around 168 621, being between ages 15 and 24. Immigrants to Canada arrive in two different ways: either through temporary entry into the country or through permanent residency. Temporary entrants include visitors or tourists, student visa holders, those who arrive with a work permit, live-in-caregivers, and those who arrive on humanitarian grounds (<http://www.canadaimmigrationvisa.com>).

Those who arrive in Canada under a temporary visa may apply for status as a Conventional Refugee, or if they marry a Canadian while under a temporary visa, they may

apply for permanent residency. Immigrants who arrive in Canada as permanent residents do so because a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident sponsored them, either under the family class, or through private sponsorship of refugees, or they applied under the independent class as skilled immigrants, such as through Provincial Nominee Programs, “Express Entry,” or through the business class, such as “Self-Employed Persons Program” (Flynn & Bauder, 2015; <http://www.cic.gc.ca>). Skilled-labour classes are increasingly becoming a more common way for immigrants to enter Canada, which promotes an employer-driven immigration system (Flynn & Bauder, 2015):

The approval rate for ‘business’-related applications was 87 %. The approval rate for ‘entrepreneurs’ and ‘self-employed’ was relatively low, at 59 and 62 %, respectively, while the approval rate for investors was 90 %. The Provincial Nominee and Live-in-Caregiver categories both had relatively high approval rates: 95 and 96 %, respectively (Satzewich, 2015, p. 1029).

In Canada, there is “the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, for people seeking protection from outside Canada; and the In-Canada Asylum Program for people making refugee protection claims from within Canada” (<http://www.cic.gc.ca>). If the Canadian government or a private group sponsors refugees, refugees come to Canada as resettled refugees, and they will receive permanent residency upon arrival into the country (Daenzer, 2014).

Typically Canada partners with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to determine who is eligible for resettlement. Some organisations in Canada partner with the Canadian government to privately sponsor and support refugees on an on-going basis and are “Sponsorship Agreement” holders (Daenzer, 2014; <http://www.cic.gc.ca>). Exceptions to Canada partnering with the UNHCR include individuals privately sponsoring refugees or when

individuals within the community join together to privately sponsor a refugee or refugees on a one-time basis. These sponsors work with the community to provide financial, emotional, and settlement support for refugees arriving in Canada. Newcomers who arrive as refugees gain advantages through “international agreements and receive more direct services than those admitted in any of the three classes of immigrants (family sponsored, economic and entrepreneurs)” (Van Aerschot & Daenzer, 2014, p. 214).

Immigrants who hold permanent residency status can apply to become Canadian citizens on behalf of themselves and their children who are also permanent residents if they meet the eligibility requirements. These eligibility criteria include that permanent residents live in Canada for at least 1,460 days during a six year period before their citizenship application, are 18 years or older, meet the minimum language proficiency requirement, and they have filed their annual tax returns (<http://www.cic.gc.ca>).

The *Alberta Immigration Progress Report* (2011) stated that “averaging 25,087 new immigrants annually, immigration to Alberta has been increasing over the period 2006-2010” (p. 12). The report also stated that in Alberta during 2010, “immigrants accounted for 19.9% of its working age population” (“Alberta Immigration Progress Report,” 2011, p. 12). With 52.5% of immigrants to Alberta settling in Calgary, the city was the preferred choice for immigrants between 2006 and 2010. As a preferred destination, approximately 16,100 immigrants arrived in Calgary in 2010 (“Alberta Immigration Progress Report,” 2011). According to the City of Calgary’s report *Diversity in Calgary: Looking Forward to 2020* (2011), in 2010 there were approximately 304,000 immigrants living in Calgary, which was almost 30% of Calgary’s population.

Currently in Calgary, there are approximately 30 programs geared towards immigrant youth; however, they are largely intended to support youth by building employability skills (“Youth Programs,” 2015). There are a few programs for immigrant and refugee youth who are at-risk of gang involvement, including the Real Me Program at Centre for Newcomers, which provides support and pre-employment skills. The Real Me Program meets the youth where they are and provides care suited to each youth’s needs, such as integrating family support and collaborating with other Calgary services to help youth reach their full potential (“Youth Programs,” 2015).

The Youth at Risk Development Program (YARD) (2015) is inclusive of all youth and partners with the Calgary Police Service. The program aids youth who want to leave gangs by providing the support of a police officer and a registered social worker. These service providers partner with the youth and their families to create an individualised action plan to help the youth leave gang life. The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth has an in-school program to help immigrant youth settle and to build life skills. The in-school program supports youth to build their English language skills, participate in community life, and enriches the lives of newcomer youth potential (“Youth Programs,” 2015). The reason I described these few programs is that these programs support “at-risk” youth. According to their program descriptions, these are programs geared towards helping youth overcome at-risk behaviours such as settlement challenges or illicit involvement.

1.2 Motivation for this Study

I trained to be a joker, a role that I will explain later in the chapter, in 2007 through a collaborative training program delivered by All Nations Theatre, now Antyx Community Arts, and facilitated by Headlines Theatre’s, now Theatre for Living’s, David Diamond (2007). I also

participated in a two-year residency where I trained to utilise forum theatre with vulnerable populations.

Despite the fact that Boal himself titled one of his books *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (1995), proponents of Boal's work claim that Boal often said that *Theatre of the Oppressed* or forum theatre is not therapy. Diamond (2007) repeatedly shared Boal's assertion that forum theatre is "not a group or individual therapy session" (Diamond, 2007, p. 58). In part because of Boal's own work, but primarily because of witnessing the engagement and full participation of at-risk immigrant and refugee youth in forum theatre, I decided to pursue this topic for my study.

I worked with youth who felt alone, isolated, financially stressed, and who became involved with alcohol, drugs, and other delinquent behaviour (Brinegar, 2010; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). I observed that clients manifested hope for the future during the forum theatre techniques, which aligned with therapy's use of the journey metaphor where clients reach a preferred identity and develop a different relationship with problems (Madsen, 2007). I observed youth explore alternatives, and witnessed them develop optimism and confidence in themselves.

Witnessing the positive outcomes of at-risk immigrant and refugee youth exploring their real-life situations with peers experiencing similar issues (Burton, 2010) inspired me to ask questions. Positive outcomes included improved self-confidence, self-awareness, becoming more informed, and developing insight (Rutten, Biester, Dekovic, Stams, Geert Jan, Schuengel, & Verweel, 2010). I wanted to know if there were any parallels between forum theatre and therapy, and whether or not forum theatre could be used as therapy with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth.

1.3 Brief Background of Forum Theatre

It is important to note that forum theatre arose out of 1960's revolutionary Brazil as theatre intended to give oppressed peoples and communities a voice. Augusto Boal (1979) founded *Theatre of the Oppressed* with influences from Paulo Freire's (2011) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire (1993) believed that the fallacy about the structure of oppression was the belief that the marginalised are outside of the structures or outside of society. However, according to Freire, the oppressed live within the structures created for them by the oppressors. Boal used theatre to stage or position the oppressed within economic, social, and political structures, and used forum theatre to challenge and transform those structures.

Throughout the creation process and forum event, that is, performing the play, the audience interventions, and creating dialogue, the community creates and transforms "consciousness," because they "discover that they are creators of culture, and that all their work can be creative" (Freire, 1993, p. 33). In effect, they transform their world, and "are no longer willing to be mere objects, responding to changes occurring around them" (Freire, 1993, p. 33). The actors, who are non-actors, and the community members, who are spectators known as spect-actors or witnesses, accept the challenge and create momentum to end their struggle and change the oppressive structures that affected them (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1993).

Furthermore, forum theatre is "not designed to serve only the participants, but the community members who gathered to see the theatre and engage in a theatrical dialogue about the issues under investigation" (Diamond, 2007, p. 59). Diamond noted that often the issues that the community want to explore are "emotionally and psychologically volatile" (Diamond, 2007, p. 59). He asserted that while the joker has many roles and responsibilities, all of those

responsibilities are about the theatre. The joker cannot “be in the role of a social worker, therapist or counsellor” (Diamond, 2007).

As a trained joker; that is, a trained facilitator of forum theatre, I employed theatre games and activities to help groups create dialogue about their community issues. As a result, I am biased that forum theatre is a strong method for creating dialogue, empowering individuals, and helping communities to work towards finding solutions. It was imperative that my bias did not influence the outcome of this research. I always approached facilitating forum theatre with the intention to do theatre, not therapy. Every time I worked with groups using forum theatre, I was clear that forum theatre was not therapy and they should have trained counsellors and/or therapists available to address any conflicts, trauma, or emotional need that actors and community members identify as a need for therapy.

The role of the joker is to facilitate workshops using theatre games and activities in which community members, who are almost always non-actors, build plays based on their struggles and oppression. The process includes building trust, finding balance, activation of images of conflict, and play creation. The play culminates at a crisis point rather than ending with the resolution of the conflict (Boal, 1995; Diamond, 2007). The joker then moves from facilitator to director ensuring that the participants understand staging the play, such as facing the audience, projecting their voices, and are able to activate the audience (Diamond, 2007).

The joker also prepares the “actors” for audience intervention, where the audience member becomes a spect-actor by replacing a character on stage and trying to resolve the problem. During the forum, or interactive performance where intervention occurs, the joker’s responsibility is to become an instigator, to challenge the community members and the players to see the issues beneath the play’s surface and to “ask more probing questions in the forum”

(Diamond, 2007, p. 129) as a means to shift perspectives about those issues, to create a dialogue, and to provide a space to solve problems. As a result of my 'joking' forum theatre with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth, I felt inspired to conduct this study. As a joker, I also observed parallels between the types of discourse that happen in forum and therapy, and I was curious to see if forum theatre could be used as an effective clinical intervention within the at-risk immigrant and refugee population.

1.4 Purpose of Study

Often, clinical interventions with immigrant and refugee youth are culturally and linguistically inappropriate, and it is important for social workers to use the best possible assessment techniques to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of immigrant and refugee youth, including rituals, beliefs, and traditional cultural practices (Este & Ngo, 2011). Culturally sensitive programs including group therapy helping at-risk immigrant and refugee youth cope with stressors, peer-pressure, addictions and other problems, help youth to develop self-esteem and make better choices (Cheong-Clinch, 2009). Forum theatre is not dependent on, or bound by language, culture, education, profession, or age.

Through a review of the literature on forum theatre, I noted there were limited studies (Gutiérrez, 2013; Songe-Møller & Bjerkestrand, 2012) on forum theatre as an intervention with immigrants and refugees, and I was unable to find any studies in English pertaining to immigrant or refugee youth. It is also important to understand how immigrant and refugee youth would be able to share narratives of their struggles and their hopes through forum theatre. I wanted to know if investigating the impacts of forum theatre on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth would help me and others to understand if forum theatre could be used to further engage the youth in a fun yet critical dialogic process.

The dialogic process is based on dialectical thought that “world and action are intimately interdependent” (Freire, 1993, p. 53). Dialogue occurs when humans reflect on their experiences and explain to the community the reasons for their actions or inaction. People who begin to recognise their oppression through reflection and action can transform themselves and their world (Freire, 1993). I also hoped to determine or assess if I would be able to utilise the dialogic process inherent in forum theatre as therapy with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth by interviewing participants in forum theatre who self-identified as having been an at-risk immigrants and refugees. To investigate and understand the experiences of at-risk immigrant youth involved in forum theatre, I reflexively utilised a generic qualitative approach, in which I used criterion and maximum variation sampling and semi-structured interviews. I followed through with transcription of the data, coding, and used the constant comparison method to analyse the data.

The purpose of my study is to share important insights into forum theatre as a means of investigating issues such as poverty, immigrant status, or lack of community with immigrant and refugee youth as they experience settling into a new country (Tam & Freisthler, 2015). Additionally, my research is an exploratory, qualitative study that investigates the potential of forum theatre as a strategy or intervention with immigrant and refugee youth that helps them deal with or overcome their barriers. Removing barriers that negatively impact immigrant and refugee youth will help them achieve their best at school and at work, where they will develop skills and contribute (Wilkinson, 2008) to the larger Calgary and Canadian community.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This is an introduction, explaining the reason I decided to pursue this study, and this chapter outlines the background of and my involvement in forum theatre. Chapter Two reviews

the literature on immigrant and refugee youth and practicing intervention programs or therapy with youth. Chapter Two also contains a discussion of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and forum theatre, as well as a synopsis of forum theatre projects with vulnerable populations. In Chapter Three, I discuss the theoretical framework that I utilised throughout the study, explaining anti-oppressive social work practice and various acculturation theories.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology, including the rationale for a qualitative approach, an overview of the participants, and an overview of the data collection and analysis. Chapter Five explains the results of this study as well as the themes that emerged from the participants who shared their experiences in forum theatre with me. Chapter Six situates my results within the scope of the literature reviewed, as well as any implications of this research on forum theatre and therapy and possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review literature on immigrant and refugee youth, including an overview of the factors that impact immigrant and refugee youth and interventions or therapy for this population. I also explain forum theatre and the interconnectedness between forum theatre and dialogical exploration of oppression. I also review studies that focus on the use of forum theatre with groups in Canada and internationally.

2.1 Immigrant and Refugee Youth in Canada

Immigrant and refugee youth come to Canada with the hope of having a better future (Khanlou, 2007). Nevertheless, migrating to a new country and the stresses of acculturating may hinder the ability of immigrant and refugee youth to learn as well as hamper their psycho-social and emotional functioning (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). Youth face the pressure of adjusting to a new society, and may also have to deal with prejudice, learning a new language, economic difficulties, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because of their experiences of past conflicts (Isakson, Legerski, & Layne, 2015; Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Refugees are distinct from immigrants in that immigrants often choose to leave their home countries while refugees are forced to escape (Fong, 2007). Refugees have also suffered extreme loss and trauma as a result of experiencing heavy conflict (Weine, Knafl, Feetham, Kulauzovic, Klebic, Sclove, & Spahovic, 2005) such as war, violence, rape, and displacement (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Refugee youth experience nightmares or traumatic memories (Isakson et al., 2015; Weine et al., 2005), which makes it difficult for them to integrate into a new culture and society. However, seeking help for PTSD, anxiety, or depression may not be the priority of refugee families, because studying and/or working to earn

money for food and housing could be their primary focus (Ellis, Miller, Baldwin, & Abdi, 2011; Weine et al., 2005).

Furthermore, refugees may have negative perceptions about “mental health and psychosocial interventions” (Weine et al., 2005, p. 566) because they are distrustful of people in authority, which may be a result of their experiences of misuse of power and systemic corruption (Ellis et al., 2011; Guruge & Butt, 2015). Weine (2008) conducted research on preventing mental health problems and behavioural issues with refugee youth. He stated that refugee families go through traumatic experiences during resettlement processing. Refugees flee their homes without official papers, and do not have the security of knowing if their request for asylum will be granted (Fong, 2007). Also, the “refugee resettlement system” that processes refugees may define family differently from the way refugees think of family; for example, some cultures do not distinguish between sons/daughters or nephews/nieces (Weine, 2008)

Unlike refugee youth who experience displacement, immigrant youth and their families choose to leave their home countries. Nevertheless, immigrant youth still face stressors upon arriving in a new country because they often have to adjust to a new language, cultural context, and diverse values, behaviours and attitudes (Patel, Tabb, Strambler, & Eltareb, 2014; Thomson, Chaze, George, & Guruge, 2015). Education is an important factor in the successful settlement of immigrant youth. Attending school and bridging the gap in educational disparity between immigrant youth and youth born in Canada can help immigrant youth build their self-esteem and aid them in developing emotional stability (Pagan-Rivera, 2014; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Immigrant and refugee youth have to acculturate to a new way of life, develop an understanding of new social mores, and learn about a new school system (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). School systems in a new country may require different work

schedules, active school participation, and a different criteria for academic performance from the students' home countries (Weine, 2008). Youth may also experience “PTSD, depression, substance abuse, and school problems” (Weine, 2008, p. 522) as well as depression and anxiety and “behavioral problems including HIV/AIDS risk behaviors and early pregnancy” (Weine, 2008, p. 525).

2.1.1 Impacts of Resettlement on Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Differences between the cultures may cause youth to feel alone and become withdrawn (Brinegar, 2010). Many immigrant and refugee youth face isolation and stress since they may not be able to fit in with their peers and to navigate the educational system. Furthermore, “immigrant children are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, compared to Canadian-born children” (Hilario, Vo, Johnson, & Saewyc, 2014, p. 1121), and many of these children continue to live in this challenging situation for the next ten years of their lives in Canada. As a result, these youth encounter discrimination, and when immigrant and refugee youth perceive they are being discriminated against, they increasingly show signs of mental health concerns, such as anxiety, depression, trouble sleeping, or digestion problems (Patel et al., 2014), and increased symptoms of PTSD (Ellis, Miller, Abdi, Barrett, Blood, & Betancourt, 2013).

Moreover, some immigrant and refugee youth experience abuse and neglect. According to Hatcher, Maschi, Morgen, and Toldson (2009), maltreated children experience adverse psycho-social, emotional, and behavioural effects that put them in danger of delinquent and at-risk behaviour. These delinquent and at-risk behaviours include substance use and high-risk sexual behaviours (Fawzi, Betancourt, Marcelin, Klopner, Munir, Muriel, Mukherjee, 2009). While some immigrant and refugee youth may become involved in illicit activities, many youth

also have to deal with misconceptions that they are more inclined to be criminally involved than they actually are (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Tam & Freisthler, 2015).

Prior to arriving in Canada, some youth experienced or witnessed brutal behaviour, lost family members during war, and experienced PTSD and other mental health challenges that may hinder their capacity to adapt and learn. Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) researched patterns in criminal activities amongst at-risk immigrant youth. In their study, the researchers used referral sampling. They interviewed twelve stakeholders who worked with at-risk immigrant youth by using a semi-structured interview guide. The results showed patterns in behaviour and identified several risk factors. The study also found that as a consequence of pre-migration stresses, youth may not be able to connect with others outside of their own cultural group, may have poor decision making skills, and they may develop low self-esteem, addiction issues, or their physical health might be negatively impacted (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Pre-migration stresses that impact refugees might include “imprisonment, war, extended torture, trafficking, and sexual violence” (Isakson et al., 2015, p. 246). Refugees often face separation from their family and friends, damage to their homes, loss of their communities, and the difficulties of living in a refugee camp.

Wilkinson (2008) quoted extensively from multiple research studies in Canada and the United States. Wilkinson (2008) reviewed several studies to understand the work experiences of immigrant and refugee youth in the Canadian labour market, and how those work situations related to the youths’ settlement and development into adults. While she did not provide the exact numbers or percentages, Wilkinson (2008) extrapolated from those studies that a large majority of immigrant and refugee youth have a settlement experience that is largely trouble-free. For immigrant and refugee youth to realise their potential of achieving success in Canada,

they have to be economically solvent, socially adept, culturally aware, and feel secure that they are able to meet their basic needs (Fawzi et al., 2009; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). They also have to be competent in the language and have confidence in themselves, which means their needs of having suitable housing, education, and health have to be met (Fawzi et al., 2009; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Immigrants and refugees who do get jobs often end up taking lower-skilled jobs with lower wages, and they often have to get more than one survival job. Difficulty accessing employment decreases immigrant and refugee's access to social supports and they may experience social and economic imbalances (George, Thomson, Chaze & Guruge, 2015). In fact, immigrant families who have difficulty getting adequate jobs, housing, and finances face difficulties that also impede their youths' mental well-being (Hilario et al., 2014; Thomson et al., 2015).

It is also possible that youth attending school may have difficulties learning the new language because of a lack of support from the school (Pagan-Rivera, 2014; Tensky, 1993). Some immigrant and refugee youth have never experienced a formal education system, or they may have to adapt to a new education system (Pagan-Rivera, 2014). Poor assessment methods and lack of culturally competent supports, such as qualified ESL teachers, support networks, involvement in school activities, and parent involvement, may place immigrant and refugee children in inappropriate classes, lower ESL levels, or programs intended for youth with special learning needs (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Tensky, 1993). Placement in a lower grade, having to attend unnecessary ESL classes, or enrollment in special education would intensify self-confidence issues and further marginalise disadvantaged youth (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005).

Youth experiencing anxiety and depression also function inadequately at school (Fawzi et al., 2009; Patel et al., 2015).

Immigrant and refugee youths' success in adapting and functioning well in Canadian society is often compromised by existing gaps in their education, no formal experience with academic training, limited employability skills, and lack of support from school, home, and community (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Immigrant and refugee youth will play a role in the Canadian labour market for much of their adulthood (Wilkinson, 2008), yet some youth may leave school without the skills necessary to manage in larger society. As a result, these youth may be attracted to risky behaviours that cause them to become involved in illegal or gang-related activities (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005).

Furthermore, youth who feel segregated, misunderstood, and unaccepted may become frustrated and angry about their place in their new society. These feelings often result in youth being torn about their own identity and may negatively impact the youths' mental well-being (George et al., 2015). To overcome these feelings, youth withdraw from school or their families and find other methods of developing their identity such as withdrawing from academics and becoming involved in delinquent behaviour, which is a way to reject mainstream culture (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). Youth who struggle with their individuality and develop a delinquent, or otherwise disapproved of, identity have longer-term addiction issues or problems constructing positive attitudes and behaviours (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009).

Moreover, immigrant and refugee youth who reject conventional society have educational failures, are unskilled, and find themselves working for a lower income or end up unemployed as adults (Wilkinson, 2008). Tam and Freisthler (2015) stated that lack of education, racism, and living in low concentration immigrant neighbourhoods hinder youths' capacity to

improve their socio-economic status. Immigrant youth who live in communities or neighbourhoods with a higher concentration of immigrants may find stability due to familiar language, cultural or societal norms and values. Therefore, communities with higher concentrations of immigrants would be one protective factor for youth, since they provide “residential stability” (Tam & Freisthler, 2015, p. 385).

Immigrant and refugee youth may be unfamiliar with educational expectations and learning processes as they try to understand a new curriculum. As they learn a new language, different patterns of speech, or word usage and face academic challenges, youth also have to deal with teachers and educators who struggle to understand these students (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). Additionally, infrequent or haphazard communication between the school and parents impedes youth receiving appropriate educational support (Pagan-Rivera, 2014; Tensky, 1993).

Youth also experience stress on account of isolation, inability to access services, and limited finances or poverty, racism, and discrimination (Tensky, 1993; Thomson et al., 2015). How the family relates to each other also impacts youths’ stress levels, which in turn affects family unity, and impacts the ability of youth to cope; that is, their resiliency (Este & Ngo, 2011). Immigrant and refugee youth who have insufficient parental supervision (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005) lack parental support because their parents do not have the necessary skills to understand or cope with their children’s issues; for example, anxiety, depression, or addiction (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

This may be even more relevant to refugee families because although immigrant families choose to immigrate, refugee families experience displacement outside of their own choosing, which influences relationship dynamics as well as potential breakdown in family structures (Hynie, Guruge, & Shakya, 2012). While youth may try to cope with their own mental health

issues and pre-migration traumas, parents themselves have to deal with PTSD as well as cope with acculturating into a new society and providing for their families (Weine, Feetham, Kulauzovic, Knafl, Besic, Klebic, Mujagic, Muzurovic, Spahovic, & Pavkovic, 2006). As such, parental stresses may impact their children negatively and family stability enables youth to develop resiliency (Tensky, 1993; Isakson et al., 2015). When families resettle, they may find themselves living in dire financial circumstances and in low-income areas. Furthermore, because the family may need additional income, parents may be forced to work extra jobs (Weine, 2008), which may result in insufficient parental supervision.

Youth may adapt to their new culture faster than their parents, which leads to them adopting values that may conflict with their parents' traditional perspectives (Tensky, 1993). Parents often have difficulty supporting their children due to "illiteracy, not speaking English, heavy work schedules, being unaccustomed to active school involvement, a sense of embarrassment about their children's performance or conduct, and unfamiliarity with how to support their child's education" (Weine, 2008, p. 525). Resettlement may cause changes in family roles and responsibilities, as well as challenges to parental authority (Weine, 2008).

Youth may take on the role of translator between their parents and teachers, doctors, community agencies, and other professionals; a role they may not want, adding strife to familial relationships (Tensky, 1993). The youth take on such roles because the family relies on them, since parents, particularly refugee parents, may have less education/no education, the family experiences poverty or financial difficulties, or the parents believe that discrimination against them occurred (Weine, 2008). Weine et al. (2006) organised family-focused groups with Bosnian refugees in Chicago to determine the best types of cultural and social interventions for refugees. The researchers conducted three Coffee and Family Education and Support (CAFES) groups

from existing family members as well as new families, whom the researchers recruited through schools and refugee services.

The researchers collected data through participant observation, notes taken during CAFES meetings, and follow-up interviews. They analysed the data using the constant comparison method from grounded theory. From the results, the researchers developed a family beliefs framework that reflected the different beliefs held by family members about their youth, traditions, refugee issues, and how those beliefs influenced behaviours. Based on the family belief framework, researchers discovered that parents who do not have support or guidance for themselves also experience difficulty in supporting their children (Weine et al., 2006), since parents may also be impacted by mental health concerns (Spencer & Le, 2006).

Parents may not be connected to their ethnic community and be discouraged by their children's inability to function socially and academically, yet have difficulty contacting the schools for information (Weine et al., 2006). Families who lived through violence may have fragile relationships and weak communication (Weine, 2008). Parents may feel constrained by their lack of understanding of youth involvement with unacceptable peers, drugs, alcohol, risky sexual activity, and other high-risk behaviours, as well as by their limited time to connect with youth over these issues (Weine et al., 2006). Furthermore, "acculturation gaps" occur because of youths' perception of their parent's lack of understanding about their friends, clothing, and activities, which further leads to greater disintegration of the family relationship (Hynie et al., 2012).

Families also have to learn new ways to discipline their children because traditional methods would be considered child abuse (Weine 2008). At the same time, youth may feel stressed because of their parents' methods of discipline and high expectations (Hyman, Vu, &

Beiser, 2011). Parents feeling constrained may be interpreted by youth as uncaring or callous, and youth may be less inclined to take responsibility for their behaviour (Weine et al., 2006), which incites them to become further involved in at-risk activities. Additional risk factors include “premature birth, parental divorce, poverty, and parental mental illness” (Este & Ngo, 2011, p. 29).

Immigrant families also have economic pressures and parents may work multiple jobs or be involved in training programs that limit the time spent with their children. The impact of these stresses on immigrant and refugee parents would leave parents with a limited capacity to respond to and address their children’s needs. Often, financial instability will perpetuate youth disillusionment about their life in Canada, especially if they are struggling in school, for social acceptance, or feel burdened to contribute to their family (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Consequently, youth may struggle to meet their basic needs by becoming involved in gangs and in illegal activities (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Youth surrender facets of their core personality as a means of adjusting to their new lives because of the difficulties in acculturating to a new society (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). Struggling to fit in and navigating differing values between mainstream culture and their home means that youth have difficulty forming a confident, resilient self-identity (Ngo, 2009). Youth dealing with the stress of acculturation, family conflict, problems with peers, learning a new language, and feeling upset or suffering anxiety or depression may also consider suicide (Cho & Haslam, 2009).

Families can be a source of strength for immigrant and refugee youth (Weine, 2008). Weine (2008) discovered that immigrant and refugee youth who received support from their families were financially stable. In addition, youth who had educated parents had decreased

vulnerability to low self-esteem and isolation because they had a sense of belonging and identity since their families were available to help them with school and homework, offer security, and be present in family activities (Weine, 2008; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). In some situations, taking on a larger role in the family, such as supporting their parents financially, interpreting for their parents, and having additional chores at home, gave youth a sense of personal growth and self-worth (Hynie et al., 2012).

Resilience is a process by which protective and risk factors relate and act on each other to improve the capability that immigrant and refugee youth have in overcoming struggles that they face (Este & Ngo, 2011). Fostering resiliency and hope, creating trust and a sense of belonging, as well as overcoming impediments with communication help youth to manage the challenging changes taking place in their lives (Weine, 2008). Youth who retain, or learn, their parents' language and learn about their country's past also have a stronger sense of self (Weine, 2008). Gaining a stronger sense of self enables youth to develop self-compassion. Zeller, Yuval, Nitzan-Assayag, & Bernstein (2015) theorised that self-compassion helps youth experiencing PTSD to better process events and feelings and move past self-blame. In time and as a result of self-compassion, these youth develop healthy coping strategies. Zeller et al. (2015) examined studies that explored the impact of self-compassion with at-risk youth and found reductions in mood, anxiety, depression, and suicide, as well as improved resiliency.

It appears that adopting Canadian culture would foster success in immigrant and refugee youth and enable them to integrate more successfully in school and at work (Wilkinson, 2008). However, youth who possess social networks within their ethnic communities develop their cultural identity and experience less social isolation (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Weine, 2008). Furthermore, youth who develop intercultural relationships by joining extra-curricular activities,

such as a social justice club, team sports or choir at their school, may also experience a sense of belonging (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Moreover, youth who receive mentorship from teachers who have experience working within a multicultural context, as well as friends to help them find their way academically and with their peers, have an advantage (Isakson et al., 2015; Tensky, 1993).

Additionally, youth who feel accomplished, respect education, and have sound problem-solving and decision-making skills are less vulnerable to illicit activities owing to their strength and resiliency (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Schools and communities are important systems that positively impact the capacity of youth to overcome difficulties as these systems can provide supportive and integrated networks that enhance resiliency (Este & Ngo, 2011; Iizuka, Barrett, Gillies, Cook, & Miller, 2014). Parents who communicate with their children's schools not only help schools advance their multicultural understanding, but also enhance youth resiliency because parents advocate for youth, which enhances their health, ability to connect with their peers, and improves youth capacity for employment (Weine, 2008).

2.1.2 Practicing with Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Studies show that immigrants typically have better overall health than native born populations; however good health deteriorates after immigration due to stresses arising from settlement into Canada (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Thomson et al., 2015). Major barriers related to immigrants and their families accessing services include challenges finding appropriate health services, struggles adjusting to life in Canada, and lack of relevant, culturally competent services (Thomson et al., 2015). Furthermore, cultural associations of gender, mental health issues, and misunderstanding of the practitioner's intentions may act as further barriers to accessing mental health services (George et al., 2015).

Thomson et al. (2015) reviewed and analysed 131 articles from over the last two decades, which provided information about immigrants' ability to use mental health services. The researchers conducted the studies in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and Newfoundland, and they recruited diverse immigrant and refugee populations. The researchers' purpose in reviewing and analysing the documents was to develop an understanding about the barriers that immigrants and refugees experience when accessing mental health care, and to make recommendations for future research and practice.

The researchers recommended that practitioners develop both "cultural and language competency" (Thomson et. al., 2015, p. 1899). They also suggested that practitioners become aware of pre-migration experiences, the aggravations of the migration experience, and the impact of those experiences on immigrants and refugees, and engage and develop a safe relationship with the client. Creating a safe relationship and safe environment permits the family and the youth to openly share their feelings and engage in the therapeutic process or intervention; it also allows the youth to openly ask for support and provides validation of achieved goals (Pagan-Rivera, 2014).

Thomson et al. (2015) noted that practitioners also need to involve youth in the development of resettlement policies. Practitioners such as social workers, therapists, and youth workers, who are perceptive about the strengths present in the cultural values of immigrants and refugees, would be able to identify and utilise those strengths when developing prevention strategies (Fong, 2007). Practitioners who utilise culturally competent strategies would provide cultural liaisons and interpreters when creating treatment plans or interventions with immigrant and refugee youth and their families. Culturally competent strategies would give practitioners a deeper understanding about cultural beliefs, perspectives, and practices, and would help

practitioners include those cultural strengths in the implementation of interventions with the youth (Ellis et al., 2013).

Identifying and utilising strengths are important because professionals need to develop culturally sensitive techniques for working with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth (Este & Ngo, 2011; Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). Experiencing marginalisation is a barrier to youth accessing services, since they could feel insecure and unsafe (Ellis et al., 2011). If practitioners have limited understanding of the culture, values, and traditions of immigrant and refugee youth, they may create greater vulnerability in the youth because these individuals may perceive they have no acceptance and understanding (Fong, 2007). Best practices should integrate elements of the youth's culture, family, and community, as well as their choices about treatment when creating an intervention plan (Isakson et al., 2015).

When families attempt to access mental health services for youth, practitioners often utilise culturally inappropriate methods and the family may have limited proficiency with the English language (Ellis et al., 2011). Practitioners may have the best of intentions when working with refugee youth; however, many practitioners “lack knowledge concerning best practice tools, principles, and procedures” (Isakson et al., 2015, p. 246). The community agencies and service providers are rooted in the host culture, which leads to difficulties with providing interventions (Weine, 2008) to immigrant and refugee youth. Family therapists and mental health practitioners are interested in developing interventions to address mental health concerns (Weine, 2008). However, “the limitations of youth-targeted clinical approaches are becoming apparent to policymakers, scientists, and front-line workers” (Weine, 2008, p. 521), so creating successful interventions not only means addressing mental health concerns (Weine et al., 2005), but also

community interventions that emphasise the many hardships that immigrants and refugees have to overcome.

Practitioners should also be able to ascertain the expansive cultural background of immigrant and refugee youth, including beliefs, ways of doing things, and values, enabling practitioners to better support youth (Este & Ngo, 2011). By ascertaining the cultural backgrounds of immigrant and refugee youth, practitioners become aware that there are cultural differences between the practitioner and the youth. As such, there is a “perceived power differential” (Isakson et al., 2015) between the practitioner and the immigrant or refugee youth. Because of the power differential, immigrant and refugee families may perceive the practitioner as not acting in the best interest of their youth, and families may not engage in treatment or in an intervention because of associated cultural stigmas about mental health issues or therapy (Pagan-Rivera, 2014).

Practitioners should be able to utilise effective techniques, such as when in English as a Second Language (ESL), they utilise efficient techniques when providing “initial assessment, subsequent placement, [...] and tracking of individuals” (Este & Ngo, 2011, p. 39). They also include therapeutic approaches that encompass the youths’ cultural needs, provides access to services addressing basic needs, e.g. housing, employment, education, and trauma-informed interventions (Isakson et al., 2015). Collaboratively building partnerships between immigrant and refugee youth, their families, service providers, and the community helps to decrease the power differential (Ellis et al., 2011) by engaging everyone in the planning and implementation of the intervention. It is also important that interventions with youth enable them to create narratives of their experiences and memories that are not only age appropriate, but also help

them have faith in the therapeutic process, family therapy, or collaborative intervention (Weine et al., 2004).

Forthun and Montgomery (2009) conducted a qualitative, person-centered analytical strategy in which they interviewed 20 youth about therapeutic interventions for immigrant youth with substance use problems. The youth who showed the highest commitment to working on changing and a “willingness to self-disclose, provide feedback and confront their peers” (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009, p. 138) were youth who had supportive relationships with their parents. These youth engaged in weekly family therapy sessions and were able to express themselves and tackle family situations in which there were conflicts. Family members often include more than the parents and the youth. In many cultures, extended family members share in raising children and adolescents, provide social support and stability, and plan family goals as well as alleviate family conflicts (Dutta, 2014). Pre-migration stresses and immigration often tear families apart, and some extended family relationships disintegrate when families immigrate to Canada.

Immigrant youth often acculturate differently from their families, which causes intergenerational conflict, discrepancies in understanding of roles within families, and expectations of how youth will engage in their new host culture. Upon immigration to Canada, most parents no longer benefit from the support of their extended families or communities, and their understanding of parenting norms within Canada often differ from parenting norms within their culture of origin (Dutta, 2014). Family therapy is an important instrument for immigrant and refugee youth because “social support from parents may be especially important as a protective factor” (Cho & Haslam, 2010).

Often, parents enable their youth’s behaviours through their unwillingness to commit to family therapy, which in turn mirrors the youth’s unwillingness to continue with the alcohol and

drug intervention. Youth who did not do well in the intervention programs had poor relationships with their families. Youth and their parents may have difficulty navigating acceptable behaviours, and families often face conflict about their youths' choices, which may include which language to use, acceptable music or friends, and even what foods to eat (Dutta, 2014). Culturally sensitive family therapy operates from the understanding that immigrant and refugee families would engage in family therapy differently from mainstream Canadian families.

Family therapy occurs when members of a family work together with a therapist to share their perspectives on family dynamics, and the therapy may centre on conflicts in the family that arise because of unaddressed trauma or intergenerational problems that are due to resettlement (Weine, 2008). Weine (2008) suggested that family therapy could focus more on the challenges resettlement places on traditional family values and roles based on cultural context. Family therapy is one support for immigrant youth that may offer them a stable and supportive environment to help the family understand differences. Differences may include generational gaps that arise from being newcomers to Canada and how settlement into a different culture affects not only their family dynamics, but also their cultural self-identities (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009; Cho & Haslam, 2010).

Family therapy may be a means for developing an understanding of how an immigrant youth's harmful behaviours are "maintained by responses in the environment" (Hartman & Laird, 1983), which refers to how youth may develop continuously destructive behaviours as a consequence of the family's inability to accommodate new cultural shifts, gaps in understanding, and system paradigms. As an example of the youth's destructive behaviour, the youth perceives that his/her family does not support him because he does poorly in school, so he becomes involved in a gang to deal with his sense of isolation. The reason for this risky behaviour is that

parent-youth relationships and parent-country acculturation affect adolescent aggression and cause social problems for “foreign born youth” (Smokowski, Buchanana, & Bacallao, 2009).

Group therapy supports immigrant and refugee youth by helping them to understand and cope with behavioural problems and stressors. Intervention programs that include group therapy would offer at-risk immigrant youth opportunities to connect positively with peers who are also struggling with the negative outcomes of settling into a new culture, as well as help them build social engagement skills, interpersonal skills, and contextual understanding of their lives (Cheong-Clinch, 2009) in Canada. Furthermore, youth attending group therapy developed more self-confidence and were able to optimistically reconstruct their traumatic experiences (Linesch, Ojeda, Fuster, Moreno, & Solis, 2014)

Through observation of two music programs with an ESL group and with a group of youth influenced by substance use, Cheong-Clinch (2009) described the objectives and outcomes of the programs as therapeutic interventions with immigrant and refugee youth. The objectives of the group therapy music programs were to increase self-esteem and social engagement skills. During the programs, the youth dealt with poor academic performance, trauma from pre-migration, and low self-esteem. Based on observations of the students who attended the two programs, the results of the music-based group therapy showed that the youth had improved educational performance, “increased confidence, enthusiasm and willingness in their participation in their activities and interactions with each other” (Cheong-Clinch, 2009). Group therapy appeared to help immigrant and refugee youth to not only deal with their stressors in a positive environment, but also to help youth to bypass behaviours that led them to clash with the law.

Linesch et al., (2014) explored the outcomes of women and adolescents who attended art therapy groups at an art centre. The group facilitators were family therapists. The adolescent groups created various art forms that expressed their life stories. One youth created a book from a vintage vinyl record and used “rocks and broken pottery to represent her struggles” (Linesch et al., 2014, p. 4). The researchers interviewed the youth about their group art therapy participation and experience. The group process engaged the youth at a level where they shared with others who had similar experiences, and they reflected about their pre-migration and settlement experiences. The youth explored identity, living in two cultures, and connectedness (Linesch et al., 2014)

Social workers, counsellors, and other practitioners working with immigrant and refugee youth need to understand the challenges and difficulties that immigrant and refugee youth face because of pre-migration, migration, and post-migration stresses. As a result of those stressors, youth may struggle with learning a new language, feeling and being healthy, and may experience economic instabilities, conflicts with their families, and psychological issues. Practitioners working with immigrant and refugee youth need to apply culturally competent practices, such as cultural communicators and interpreters, and provide services aligned with the youths’ cultural tradition, values, and beliefs.

2.2 Forum Theatre

Augusto Boal was a revolutionary and a theatre director who believed in popular education. He was greatly influenced by Paulo Freire (1993) and he developed a framework for using theatre as a tool for dialogical communication. Boal (1979) created *Theatre of the Oppressed*, also known as forum theatre, amid the political violence and suppressive economic climate of 1960’s Brazil. Boal (1979) created *Theatre of the Oppressed* to reduce the distance

between the audience and the actor and to address oppression (Proctor, Perlesz, Moloney, McIlwaine, & O'Neill, 2008; Schutzman, 1990). Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) or forum theatre, in which he created a dialogue about oppression and social justice, is closely connected to Paulo Freire's (1993) ideas of critical pedagogy (Wilson, 2010).

Forum theatre is influenced by Freire's (1993) premise about the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The relationship is not only complicated, but it is also closely related to structural and personal oppression, and this style of interactive theatre uses approaches that raise awareness of shared oppression while developing a dialogue to address that oppression (Diamond, 2007; Houston, Magill, McCollum, & Spatt, 2001). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1993) suggested that creating a connection between dialogical teaching and cultural practice based upon the experiences of the person is important. It is important because Freire (1993) believed that through dialogue, which is a means for analysing, creating, and understanding the object of knowledge, transformation of self and of the world can occur. In order for transformation to occur, there needs to be recognition that the oppressed, or marginalised people, do not actually live outside of society, but are oppressed by the societal structures they live within (Freire, 1993).

Through reflection, which occurs through sharing, people are able to understand that they jointly create their realities, and as such, begin to realise that they are able to transform those realities. Thematic investigation is the investigation of people's reality through co-creating, linking problems, and examining people's truths, both the reflection of those truths as well as the actions taken because of those truths. Freire (1993) suggested that thematic investigation evokes structural and personal change. Audiences, actors, and facilitators can see this thematic investigation in forum theatre. To Boal (1995), "all problems are political" (p. 32), because it is

society that structures oppression. In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal (1979) stated that we all wear masks, which are developed and created from “habits of thought, of language, of our profession” (p. 168). The masks become the masks of the characters; thus forum theatre is real. Nothing on stage is a lie. In fact, there are benefits to realism because the character’s illumination of the emotion and story was better as a result of the actors being both themselves and the character. According to Freire (1993), “the world which brings consciousness into existence becomes the world *of* that consciousness” (p. 82), and forum theatre stages the real world.

As such, Boal (1995) sought to superimpose the “theatrical and therapeutic fields” (p. 37) as a way to explore personal suffering. Boal (1995) suggested that both the theatrical and therapeutic contain dichotomy. The actor creates and performs an experience that is not real, yet at the same time, the play is based on memory and reality; the actor feels the emotion of the character that they are playing, but that feeling does not belong to the actor, only to the character in relation to other characters. This is the dichotomy of the person acting in forum theatre, and Boal (1995) stated that exploring the possible choices of and outcomes for the character is similar to therapy:

A process is therapeutic when it allows – and encourages – the patient to choose from several alternatives to the situation in which he finds himself, the situation which causes him unwanted suffering or unhappiness. In enabling, and indeed requiring, the patient to observe himself in action – since his own desire to show obliges him both to see and to see himself – this theatrical process of recounting, in the present, and in front of witnesses ‘in solidarity’, a story lived in the past, offers, in itself, an alternative (p. 54).

As such, Boal's (1979) forum theatre processes derive from Bertolt Brecht's use of the person as both the subject and the object (Boal, 1979; Schutzman, 1990; Synder-Young, 2011) to present problems and incite spect-actors to challenge societal and cultural norms (Diamond, 2007; Synder-Young, 2011). "For Brecht, the character's social relations create the dramatic action" (Boal, 1979, p. 93) because the societal or economic relations are the subject that acts on or impacts the character, who is the object. The subject acts on or influences the character's reactions, beliefs, or development. In this sense, the "character *is not free* at all. He is an object-subject" (Boal, 1979, p. 92).

Both Boal (1975) and Freire (1993) stressed the importance of the witness, who is both brave and necessary in observing the structures and politics of oppression as well as challenges to the oppression itself. Through witnessing, the spectator challenges the dominant structures, and because they replace the actor on stage, they are no longer passively experiencing the oppression. This is in line with Brecht's poetics, that is, Brecht was in favour of emotion based on knowledge rather than ignorance, the spectator gains understanding of the character, and instead of passive experience, the spectator becomes the author of a story about how to break oppression:

Empathy is the emotional relationship which is established between the character and spectator and which provokes, fundamentally, a delegation of power on the part of the spectator, who becomes an object in relation to the character: whatever happens to the latter, happens vicariously to the spectator (Boal, 1979, p. 102).

In the North American context, facilitators adapted Boal's (1979) methods from a revolutionary context to one of exploring concepts of identity and healing (Schutzman, 1990). Forum theatre is a means of shifting power between the actors and spectators by acquiring

authority over representation, which transforms identity and reality (Houston et al., 2001; Mattingly, 2001).

Participants create forum theatre by using games and activities to build trust, encouragement, and a cohesive group, during which they apply their real struggles and concerns (Sullivan, Petronella, Brooks, Murillo, Primeau, & Ward, 2008; Wilson, 2010). Quite frequently, people who participate in the forum theatre process do not know each other and do not know what they will be participating in. They also enter the process in the present, where they are at that moment in their lives, sometimes feeling powerless because of their experiences of not being able to speak or to be heard (Diamond, 2007). Forum theatre is a tool for those who feel powerless because it allows them to have a voice (Malchy, Johnson, & McBride, 2011).

The actors engage the audience bodily, mentally, emotionally, and psychologically based on the expectation that the process will create change and generate action because of the scenes' resonance with the audience's everyday lived experiences (Diamond, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2008). The forum theatre culminates with a performance in which the play is run through once; when it is performed a second time, audience members, or spect-actors, intervene by yelling 'stop,' and take the place of an actor (Wilson, 2010). The entire process is an open-minded, collaborative one, open to any age, education level, or culture (Sleip, Weingarten, & Gilbert, 2004). Participants and spect-actors have opportunities to critically analyse and reflect about internalised and externalised problems as represented by the oppressed and oppressor within the performance (Schutzman, 1990).

Moreover, while the process is inherently communal, individuals experience changes in their personal perspective and attitudes (Sullivan et al., 2008). Nevertheless, while the intention of forum theatre is to confront oppressive standards and conventions, there is the potential that

spect-actors will react in unexpected or unwanted ways (Synder-Young, 2011). Furthermore, providing a space or a stage where people's voices are heard does not necessarily empower them to share their voices or gain power in the larger context of real life (Mattingly, 2001). Even so, social workers could use forum theatre as a means to explore and combine an analytical, intellectual approach with a creative practice, thus enhancing dialogue between people (Houston, Magill, McCollum, & Spatt, 2001).

2.3 Art Therapies

Blank (2010) quoted Katherine Amsden, a social worker, as saying that the “difference between talk therapy and creative arts therapies is that the latter involve the whole person, which is a social work approach” (p. 13) and such a holistic approach brings forth imagination and independence. According to Chambon (2009), social work practices incorporate society and culture, including the economic and political as connected to the personal. Social work also challenges and strives to change the structures, practices, attitudes and beliefs in society. In society, “invention and struggle can go hand in hand: those who experience struggle in society may revert to invention in art-making as a way of transcending harsh treatment through portrayal and representation (Moodey, 2013, p. 236).

As such, art-making is integral to the practice of social work since social work is about supporting people who feel down-trodden, and those who face difficulty overcoming the challenging social issues facing them (Moodey, 2013). In social work, “art therapy is a conduit for individual and group transformation” because it speaks about the “real world” (Chambon, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, social work often utilises art as a means to “exteriorize” or release troubles or strong emotions, to create a space for difficult conversations, explore

“powerlessness” and “oppression,” or be a source of reflection and meditation and provide an impetus for personal and social change (Sinding, Warren, and Paton, 2014).

In relation to immigrant and refugee youth, art therapy provides a space for the youth to build their confidence, express pride in their ethnic origin, and enables them to reflect upon and to share their struggles of acculturation (Linesch et al., 2014). Linesch et al. (2014) facilitated group sessions using art therapy. During these sessions, the participants used various objects to create “tapestries” of their experiences, and the facilitators used observation to create case studies. After the group process, the facilitators interviewed two volunteers from each group, and the researchers then coded for themes that described the participants’ acculturation experiences.

In the 1970s and 1980s, people like Paolo Knill, Shaun McNiff, and Karen Estrella responded to the demand that the use of art “do more than express outwardly what is felt inwardly, that in fact artistic expression cannot be reduced to pre-existing psychological states” (Levine, 2011, p. 22). They called for art to exist beyond the acknowledged psychological paradigm, to include art as a method to comprehend the holistic experience, and to situate itself beyond the standard rules of psychology (Levine, 2011). As a result, therapists developed expressive art therapy, also known as expressive therapy, which uses art-making to help individuals and communities develop self-awareness and create opportunities for social action and social change. Art-making within expressive art therapy builds community by including or excluding psychotherapy (Estrella, 2011).

Levine (2011) suggested that the creative and made-up world of the play takes place on the both the theatre stage and within our lived reality. This work evokes an emotional response since we are moved by what we see or by which we participate. This response is known as an “aesthetic response” to the work as stated in the following:

The term “aesthetic response” has often been understood in expressive arts therapy as the artistic response of the therapist to the client (e.g. by writing a poem in response to the client’s artwork), but it properly means the *client’s* affective response to what he or she has made (Levine, 2011, p. 25).

Furthermore, expressive therapists believe that the role of the “expert” does not belong to the therapist, but rather to everyone involved in creating the art, the struggle, the story, or the images that arise (Estrella, 2011). Through art, people are capable of transforming the world, and by juxtaposing the real world with the imagined alternative, the art enables people to see possibilities that are often unseen or unacknowledged within their consciousness (Levine, 2011). Transforming society becomes possible when people believe that they have the resources and ability to create change where they live. Therefore, a restored sense of community takes place when people create art with other people.

Estrella (2011) stated that critics such as Wadeson argued “that if art therapy is to maintain its professional integrity, art therapists must be in the business of providing ‘therapy’” (p. 44) and Wadeson questioned whether expressive art therapy is indeed therapy. Expressive therapies meet the client, individual and community where they are at, and create a space where people connect with self-inquiry or reflection, where people explore their trauma and emotions, and where the individual can holistically situate themselves in a healing process (Estrella, 2011). There is a strong connection between expressive therapy and social action. While creative art therapy works within a particular discipline, often therapists feel concerned about trying new therapies that are not yet sanctioned or may yet be considered “unsafe” (Levine, 2011).

Expressive art therapy is intermodal, and utilises any art form to facilitate change. Furthermore, expressive therapists recognise healing and social transformation, and that social

action should belong to everyone rather than “be relegated to a group of specialized professionals” (Estrella, 2011, p. 49). As such, Estrella (2011) suggested that students learn expressive therapies alongside their studies in therapy, social work, clinical intervention, and social action. The arts ought to have a place in social work education, for as students immerse themselves in literature or theatre, they will develop empathy, share experiences, and be encouraged to work together to solve problems and generate plentiful and useful ideas (Sinding, Warren, and Paton, 2014). Generating ideas was the purpose of using drama in an article by Dan Wulff (2010). Academics, professors, administrators, and students used art and theatre to make a difference amongst social work students, enabling them to have difficult conversations about racism and messy social problems, which are difficult conversations to have in the academy.

On the impact of art on the community, Paolo Knill (2011) stated that in “systems theory,” creating an intervention challenges relationship structures at the same time that it produces “play.” Furthermore, communities that create art together can also generate “play” where participants are stirred-up; the people within the community organise themselves according to the guidelines set forth. In the community, the art leader both understands the difficulties in the community and “plays” differently from the rest of the community. It is important for therapists to create and influence the art and the space used for healing because the “most transformative art experiences are often those that break, fragment, annoy, and even destroy the leader’s and/or group participants’ frames of reference and expected outcomes” (McNiff, 2011, p. 86). The therapist understands that this breaking apart of self is a necessary stage in order to achieve healing.

Expressive art therapy is also a medium for helping people to develop empathy and to understand others. The process of seeing another’s lived experiences enables the therapist and

the client, the group, or the community to help and to heal. One of the mediums that expressive art therapy utilises to build empathy and shared understanding is role-playing and drama. Drama examines power dynamics and discord, and appeals to people's sense of compassion while invoking understanding (Burton, 2010). Drama also helps the actor to connect socially, to utilise and to explore their feelings, and to become confident, while drama therapy intentionally uses theatre methods to address relationship, physical, or psycho-emotional issues (Blank, 2010; Burton, 2010).

Burton (2010) discussed the findings from data collected by researchers in Australia. The researchers processed information about how the "Acting Against Bullying Program" enabled students to deal with bullying through various theatre processes and exercises. Although Burton did not discuss the methodology of the study, he did share that researchers administered questionnaires to students to confirm observations and information provided by teachers. The students, teachers, and facilitators also provided information in discussion groups about effective learning that occurred through the drama program.

The difference between forum theatre and drama therapy is that in drama therapy, the participants write a brand-new play to be performed and typically use props like puppets (Blank, 2010), while forum theatre has no pre-determined script or outcome (Diamond, 2007). Forum theatre is an interactive, dichotomic, pedagogical process between the facilitator, actor, and audience (Schutzman, 1990; Wilson, 2010). Additionally, forum theatre is different from "psychodrama" with its intense emotional exploration where cognitively beneficial "re-traumatization" occurs. Boal's (1995) theatre games emphasise a separation of personal and community and stresses that what went before is distinct from the current moment (Schutzman, 1990).

At the time of Proctor et al.'s. (2008) participatory action research involving therapists who recorded their thoughts about the links between forum theatre and therapy, there was no concrete connection between forum theatre and therapy. To date, the publication about their investigation is the only one that I found that explores the relationship between counselling techniques and forum theatre. Boal (1995) never distinguished his methods as those appropriate for therapeutic use and those appropriate for social action (Schutzman, 1990). While Boal (1995) superimposed the theatrical with the therapeutic in *The Rainbow of Desire*, practitioners who use his techniques noted that Boal (1995) often said that forum theatre is not therapy (Proctor et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, Boal's (1995) work is a "kind of group interactive therapy" that challenges the idea that there is only one narrative or self and politicises oppression and social injustice (Schutzman, 1990). The forum theatre process shares "counselling's therapeutically-based paradigm of change" (Proctor et al., 2008, p. 45), and "reflects an interest in 'internalised' oppression such as fears, voices of self-criticism, and self-doubt, core to many presenting problems in clinical practice, and aims to empower individuals to take charge of the "oppression in their head" (p. 44-45). With the problems of oppression that Boal's (1995) techniques address, therapy has a revolutionary edge in that his inventiveness with theatre exercises is meant to serve a cause, challenging legitimate 'oppressors' (Schutzman, 1990).

2.4 Brief Synopsis of Published Uses and Research

In this section, I provide a brief synopsis of articles about forum theatre with diverse population groups to showcase how practitioners used forum theatre to educate and inform participants and community members about various issues ranging from health hygiene to mental illness. Facilitators also used forum theatre to engage in difficult conversations such as domestic

violence and through those conversations determine community needs. While I only found one article that investigated the use of forum theatre as therapy, the following studies demonstrate that researchers connected the use of forum theatre with intervention tools that created dialogue and change with youth and adults as well as with the larger community.

Since I am interested in knowing if social workers can use forum theatre as therapy, I was interested in research by Australian family therapists at the Bouverie Centre, who investigated the link between family therapy, clinical supervision, and training and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Proctor et al., 2008) in a participatory action research project. Twelve family therapists participated in a research-project based on Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* and recorded their reflections as trainers, supervisors, and therapists of applications of *Theatre of the Oppressed* within clinical settings in contrast with other action techniques used by family therapists as therapeutic tools.

Such techniques included a wide range of art therapies, drama methods, role play, and sculpting. However, as noted by its authors, there is no other account or research about *Theatre of the Oppressed* as an intervention or tool used within the search process, including training the therapists in forum theatre techniques, forming a 'cooperative inquiry group,' and exploring the utilisation of the forum theatre techniques in their own work. The group explored the meaning of oppression, the concept of "the first person plural" (p. 48), wherein family members often personalised experiences, and how *Theatre of the Oppressed* provided the space to discover several denotations and solutions that can occur within a therapy session.

Within a supervision setting, the supervisor used forum theatre with a group of counsellors to explore self-harm and suicide. The process enabled the participants to recognise the needs of the group, explore meaning, and to create opportunities for individuals to understand

the relationship between action and meaning. Moreover, participants engaged in dialogue and presented solutions around the issues, which in this case was self-harm.

As a result of this research, the clinical therapists who participated utilised various *Theatre of the Oppressed* techniques within their work, as it is a component of teaching and training students. Community health counsellors also integrated the techniques into the state-wide training of community health counsellors, since the study ascertained that *Theatre of the Oppressed* provided a creative and safe process that integrates action with therapy or supervision. While significant, because the researchers understood and validated that forum theatre methods contributed to supervision, training, education, and therapy, this study was the only research I found linking forum theatre with therapy.

It was also important to understand how forum theatre has been used with at-risk youth. In Conrad's (2005) study, she employed Boal's ideas and activities as part of a popular theatre process with 'at-risk,' primarily Aboriginal youth in rural Alberta. Conrad (2005) conducted a participatory research project with high school students to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of youth labelled as 'at-risk.' She did this as part of her doctoral project utilising popular theatre as the participatory research method, and found that 'at-risk' correlated heavily with being Aboriginal. Conrad (2005) described her process as a researcher examining her questions and findings on ethical problems, as well as her ethical stance in taking an interest in speaking for 'other' as well as 'othering' by categorising and labelling youth 'at-risk.' While she maintained that popular theatre is an effective tool of engaging youth in exploring their experiences, Conrad (2006) asserted that popular theatre is not therapy. The primary result of the study was that popular theatre offers students possibilities to challenge themselves and their

peers within a secure space because it provides opportunities for students to articulate themselves and find out more about their identity.

At-risk factors for youth also include experiencing problems with other students (Cho & Haslam, 2009), and such problems often involve bullying by peers. Forum theatre can be a tool to empower children and youth to understand the underlying causes of bullying and to develop skills to address it. In Burton (2010)'s article, facilitators used forum theatre with a group of adolescent girls to look at bullying as part of an Acting Against Bullying Applied Theatre Program in Australia. Facilitators created a key approach by combining forum theatre with improvisation, drama, and peer teaching. The facilitators modified Boal's structure of forum theatre to delineate scenes and to enable the audience members to stop the scenes at any time, not only to intervene, but also to discover what characters were thinking during a situation.

The researchers utilised The Acting Against Bullying program with girls in an effort to understand and create awareness about covert or indirect bullying. The researchers used observations and a survey to discover whether girls self-identified as bullies or participated in indirect bullying. The use of the modified or 'Enhanced Forum Theatre' techniques enabled the girls to explore bullying, and individuals influenced by bullying, in a creative space that improved personal learning. At the end of the program, results of a summative questionnaire showed that instead of being witnesses to bullying, the girls felt informed and willing to use strategies discovered through the process to deal effectively with bullying.

Another study that shows how forum theatre effectively empowers students' to address bullying is Bhukhanwala's (2014) article on the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* to intervene in bullying. Bhukhanwala (2014) created a theatre club at a middle-school to support early adolescent children in creating images about being bullied and being the bully. Over ten ninety-

minute sessions, the group of students used forum theatre to discuss possible ways to end bullying and to consider multiple ideas and outcomes to the offered solutions. A key result of students participating in forum theatre was that they realised that they could approach bullying in different ways and that they could rely on themselves to be the solution. Bhukhanwala (2014) discovered that educators could utilise forum theatre to engage students and help students think critically when addressing bullying.

Vulnerability to risk-factors and negative peer involvement could take place anywhere. According to Rutten, Biester, Dekovic, Stams, Geert Jan, Schuengel, & Verweel (2010), competitive youth sports created opportunities for youth to develop positive behaviours, self-awareness, and emotional insight. However, competitive youth sports, as explained by youth, also create situations that promote anti-social, aggressive, or anti-collaborative behaviours. Facilitators used forum theatre with four youth soccer sports clubs in Europe to examine and enhance their moral characters (Rutten et al., 2010). Facilitators intended to use forum theatre as an intervention in youth sports clubs to create action pieces and instances for youth to explore their contributions to sport, their attitudes and behaviours within the sport, increase their capacity to reflect and be reflexive, and rouse youth to have, think about, and address moral issues within sports.

The study included a pre-test and post-test, without a control group, and consisted of questionnaires provided to 99 boys prior to and after the forum theatre intervention. The research measured ‘moral team atmosphere,’ ‘moral reasoning about sports dilemmas,’ ‘fair play,’ ‘on- and off-field anti-social and prosocial behaviour,’ ‘verbal intelligence,’ and ‘social desirability’ (Rutten et al., 2010). The results determined that the intervention enhanced moral team atmosphere and moral reasoning, and produced more positive on-field prosocial behaviours, but

also found that this intervention did not affect changes in anti-social behaviours. Self-reporting limited the study, and the authors maintained that it is possible other factors, outside of the intervention, contributed to the positive changes experienced by the youth.

While Gale (2011) did not address bullying, she was interested in using forum theatre to address the social effects of being different. For her dissertation, Gale (2011) delved into how *Theatre of the Oppressed* could create social change. Gale collaborated with a social justice organisation, youThink, integrating Participatory Action Research, the educational pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and elements of *Theatre of the Oppressed*. The purpose of the project was to examine social justice issues to teach responsibility to others by examining thoughts and perceptions about homophobia in California schools. The organisation recruited youth, created short scenes, and then asked the youth to present the scenes and to reflect on them.

While the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* enabled the process to be participatory, there were some limitations, such as the fact that the participants kept changing, the performances were short, and Gale (2011) was only at the beginning her journey of looking at transforming homophobic culture. Gale's (2011) thesis research was about the dialogue the youth used to express themselves to the teachers, discuss the interventions, and begin the conversation about changing homophobic culture in schools. The capacity to use forum theatre as a tool to transform a culture that employs fear as a weapon against the vulnerable helps youth develop resiliency. Zeller et al. (2015) suggested that resilient youth had reduced depression and suicidal ideation.

It is notable that Saldana (1999) used the workshops to help students talk about social justice, equity, and oppression around social class. These are the issues that Boal (1979) created forum theatre to address. On Annual High School Theatre Day in Arizona, sixty students participated in two forum theatre workshops facilitated by Saldana (1999). Saldana (1999)

provided a brief five-page re-cap about the scenes. The author also provided reflections about how the workshops supported class structures between inner-city students, who participated in the first workshop, and affluent students, who participated in the second workshop. Saldana (1999) reflected that the inner-city students created a supportive and engaging environment about real issues, such as being new to the school or adolescent hostility.

Saldana (1999) also reflected that since the affluent students did not associate with lower-class groups and oppression was not visible in their environment, they may not have been able to address oppression. The workshops supported the class structures because each group presented scenes with which they were familiar. He went on to say that the affluent students' forum theatre plays were like television skits or comedies. The separation of situation and context between affluent students and poor students reflected how structure and class affect perceptions of oppression and marginalisation, since Saldana (1999) suggested that the affluent students presented caricatures rather than real scenes of oppression.

In coping with oppression that impacts their mental health and well-being, youth may not understand that they may require extra support (Weine, 2006). Practitioners in the UK discovered that forum theatre could be used to inspire children's self-efficacy. Hammond (2013) encouraged educational psychologists to use forum theatre to determine children's views and support their voices. Hammond (2013) suggested that forum theatre could be used by the larger school community to support social inclusion and give children the capacity to share their challenges and ignite social change. The research took place in a rural, British primary school and included 32 students and three staff. The majority of the school participated in forum theatre and contributed to the discussion. Using a semantic, deductive, thematic analysis, Hammond

(2013) found that forum theatre contributed to the students' empowerment and provided opportunities for the children to discuss difficult issues safely.

Substance use contributes significantly to youth becoming involved in other at-risk behaviours such as criminal involvement (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). In researching how forum theatre could be used to intervene with youth engaged in substance use, I was only able to find one article exploring addiction. However, in Perry's (2011) dissertation for her Master of Arts, she investigated the differences between Participatory Action Research and *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Perry (2011) explored her personal experiences as well as the experiences of residents at a treatment centre who attended a *Theatre of the Oppressed* group. By providing a narration of her reflections on her observations, Perry (2011) asked herself questions about what transformations or changes happened within the individuals participating in the theatre group.

Perry (2011) also looked at themes such as addiction, faith, and privilege by questioning the participatory process and by questioning her own interactions as both observer and participant. While Perry (2011) wrote about how the treatment centre utilised various group therapies "consisting of art, music, drama, meditation, running, and surfing" (p. 15), there was no discourse in her thesis about the utilisation of *Theatre of the Oppressed* as therapy. Rather the focus seemed to be on her experiences, understanding people, reflecting on the dynamic relationships of people involved in a participatory action research process, and addiction.

Often, family relationships affect youths' ability to cope with stress (Este & Ngo, 2011). Abuse, neglect, or violence in a family could lead to at-risk behaviours (Hatcher et al., 2009). Using forum theatre techniques, Wang (2010) did not provide a methodology for a study, but explained that he undertook the methodology of a reflective stance to examine his practices as a facilitator, along with community workers, in a theatre project designed and funded by the

community in an attempt to reduce domestic violence in Taiwan. As the facilitator, Wang (2010) provided his perspective about the relationship between the facilitator and participants in the theatre workshops. Wang (2010) provided synopses of conversations between characters and used those synopses to analyse elements of the performances. In the workshops, Wang (2010) used modified forum theatre techniques to help Vietnamese brides share their experiences of domestic violence.

Wang (2010) described his experiences preparing for the forum theatre project with female elders at a community centre, as well as his experiences using Boal's forum theatre and image theatre in generating different reactions to scenes depicting domestic violence. The forum theatre provided a safe zone for the audience to witness, laugh at, and critique male aggression and lust because participating in theatre subverted these issues through the portrayal of male characters by respected female elders. Through forum theatre, Wang (2010) concluded that the women were able to share their stories of domestic violence, breakdown the hierarchical power of the male, and invite the community to tackle domestic violence.

In Mitchell and Freitag's (2011) study, the authors described how, in domestic violence situations, traditional violence prevention programs advocate for women to protect themselves by decreasing risk and through self-defence techniques. However, the authors found that only educating women was not doing enough to prevent violence as traditional approaches disregard the collective responsibility of prevention. As a response, they developed a 'bystander approach' using forum theatre. Traditionally, a bystander is a witness who does not respond or intervene in difficult situations even if they dislike what they see happening. However, in this approach, the community changed the meaning of bystander because the witness to violence is accountable for challenging and changing cultural norms around gender violence.

Forum theatre provided a space for community dialogue, which educated group members to recognise that gender violence is sanctioned and normalised in American society. Mitchell and Freitag (2011) explained Boal's (1979) *Theater of the Oppressed* framework, and how the authors used this framework to invite audience members to interact, intervene, and generate dialogue about their duties as bystanders in preventing incidences of gender violence including harassment, stalking, rape, or related behaviours. The outcome of using forum theatre in this approach revealed that there was a creation of empathy for victims of violence, a reduction in the 'victim-blaming' mindset, and raised the likely-hood of bystanders intervening in future incidents of gender violence.

Many of the issues affecting at-risk immigrant and refugee youth arise from their involvement with the community (Tam & Freisthler, 2015). Some practitioners utilise forum theatre with the larger community to start conversations about shared struggles as well as to potentially discover solutions. Jana Sanskriti Theatre of the Oppressed is situated in India, where the company works to invite the community, through a participatory process, to create performances where community members consciously and openly talk about the presented issues (Mills, 2009). The author spent two months with the Girish Bhavan centre in West Bengal as part of her master's degree, and witnessed the use of forum theatre with women and the community. The community developed Jana Sanskriti in response to the struggles around "case, gender, and even education" (p. 551) that contributed to power differentials and marginalisation within Indian society. Jana Sanskriti also integrated the use of traditional art in the latter part of the forum theatre process as a means of overcoming the use of cultural forms to maintain marginalisation. While Mills did not conduct research about Jana Sanskriti, through observation

of the theatre workshops Mills concluded that forum theatre, as utilised by Jana Sanskrit, enables participants to create change within themselves and in their communities.

Addressing mental health concerns for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth is sometimes necessary (Patel et al., 2014). Facilitators utilised forum theatre in a mental health setting with people who lived with mental illness to engage them in addressing tobacco use, and they found that there were no previously documented forum theatre projects exploring tobacco use (Malchy, Johnson, & McBride, 2011). In this instance, facilitators intended to use forum theatre to cope with and change the understanding of tobacco use within mental health settings. Researchers evaluated the project at the end of the performance through the use of questionnaires filled out by audience members as well as forum theatre participants, field notes and observations, and focus group data. Ninety-six percent of audience members reported that forum theatre was a great medium for getting people involved in a dialogue about tobacco use and mental illness, and recommended that it be used for this purpose (p. 67). Participants reflected and reported on the effects of the group experience and opened dialogue about tobacco use behaviours. They also reported that participation in this process somewhat lessened their reliance on smoking as a method to connect with each other.

At-risk factors affecting youth diminished as they, their peers, parents, and community became more educated and informed (Weine, 2008). The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Center in Texas utilised forum theatre to educate communities about issues related to toxic contamination, and environmental justice community groups used forum theatre techniques to symbolise the connections between exposure to contaminants and negative consequences to health (Sullivan et al., 2008). The researchers described forum theatre or *Theatre of the Oppressed* as opportunities to create ‘anti-models’ and correlated these ‘anti-

models' to Freire's mode of 're-presenting' reality as challenges to solve instead of difficulties to perpetually carry. The educators used the forum theatre techniques to inform and educate community groups, enter into dialogue about their environmental fears, and move communities from dialogue to action. This participatory approach enabled communities to acknowledge their own attitudes towards community health as well as to undertake finding answers to their questions through the forum theatre process. This article is relevant to understanding the scope of how practitioners use forum theatre because it emphasises that the first step to change is knowledge (Freire, 1993).

Communities that have shared backgrounds and are stable benefit their residents (Tam & Freisthler, 2015), and educating community members who share struggles helps them to come together. In Peru, Pleasant, de Quadros, Pereira-Leon, and Cabe (2015) tested a pilot health project the organisers called Theatre for Health. Theatre for Health integrated various types of art, including "music, dance, theatre, and visual arts" (p. 54). The project utilised *Theatre of the Oppressed* with the aim to introduce a change in behaviours that would improve the overall health of the community, such as hand-washing or using disinfectants. By integrating methods of *Theatre of the Oppressed* in a series of twelve performances, the participants engaged fully as community members responsible for identifying health problems and took responsibility for contributing to the health of friends and family members. In the Theatre for Health project, the 'joker' (or forum theatre facilitator) also had the added responsibility of providing the average 172 adult and 59 child attendees with evidence-based information. Such information was helpful to community members in improving their understanding of health issues, challenges, and the assumption of behaviours that would promote better health.

Ownership of shared struggle can empower communities to create change as community members address structural oppression (Freire, 1993). Community members can utilise forum theatre to show engage in dialogue with policy makers. In “Maladjusted,” a forum theatre performance in which patients and caregivers created a play about mental health care and policy, Leichner and Wieler (2015) shared that audiences had the opportunity to contribute solutions towards the legislative problems that have become inherent in mental health care. As a result of the forum theatre performances, the authors categorised “over 270 policy suggestions during the play and dialogue series” (p. 80) as themes in a policy report by mental health organisations. The authors contended that forum theatre “increases the humanization of the issue by personalizing them” because topics move from a third-person narrative to an “‘I’ and ‘You’” language (p. 82).

In trying to find studies that investigated the use of forum theatre with immigrants and / or refugees, I was only able to find one that directly stated it was research with immigrant students. Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand (2012) presented their findings from their action research project conducted in nine phases. The researchers used forum theatre as a method to explore “intercultural communication as a tool for the integration process” (p. 1). They also wanted to test a modified forum theatre with immigrant students at various learning centres and ethnic Norwegians in drama classes at university. Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand (2012) collected data through interviews, photos, and videos, and reported on their findings from phases six and seven. The findings concluded that the modified forum theatre process led to self-discovery and that spectators had a large role in identifying and taking apart oppression.

In his research, Gutiérrez (2013) utilised forum theatre as part of his course on Chicana/o studies that he taught in the fall 2012 semester at the University of California. Gutiérrez (2013) did not state if any of his students were immigrants. There were 34 students in Gutiérrez’s (2013)

course, which dealt with themes of Chicano/Latino history. Gutiérrez's (2013) doctoral dissertation assessed the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a means to create engagement, self-reflection, and critical thought amongst undergraduate students in their classroom. Gutiérrez (2013) focused on the idea that student engagement enhances learning. During a two-week period in the semester, Gutiérrez (2013) utilised *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a means for the students to interact with each other and develop a sense of community. Using an ethnographic data collection method to determine how *Theatre of the Oppressed* contributed to student engagement and to "conscientization," Gutiérrez (2013) concluded that this inquiry yielded "Boal's stated purposes of promoting dialogue" (p. 166).

2.5 Chapter Summary

There is no current literature on the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* or forum theatre with immigrant and refugee youth in Canada. Although, there is one study with immigrants at learning centres in Norway and another that may have included immigrants amongst the chicana/o population at university (Gutiérrez, 2013; Songe-Møller & Bjerkestrand, 2012), the researchers did not identify the participants in these studies as youth. The research explored forum theatre as a means to understand and create a discourse about individual and societal oppression.

The reason I identified the limited scope of literature on the use of forum theatre is two-fold. Firstly, there are currently no studies on the impact of using forum theatre with immigrant and refugee youth to explore how migration and resettlement impacts them. Secondly, absent from the literature is how forum theatre could be used as a clinical tool, either as therapy or as a counselling technique to help people with mental health concerns, addiction, criminal involvement, or other social and personal issues. In my next chapter, I will provide a review of

literature pertaining to my theoretical framework and the rationale of the theories as they applied to my study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides an overview of anti-oppressive social work practice as well as an explication of the theories of acculturation. I provide a rationale for using these theories within the scope of my research as well as the limitations inherently associated with these two theoretical perspectives. I also describe the relationship between my theoretical framework and forum theatre with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth.

3.1 Anti-Oppressive Practice

“The purpose of social work education is to prepare graduates for social work practice” (Campbell, 2003, p. 123), and one of the theories within social work that is used to prepare students is anti-oppressive practice. This theory and practice is an over-arching theoretical framework built upon “feminist, civil rights, gay and lesbian, disability, and other social movements” (Campbell, 2003, p. 121). These movements seek to understand how humans function relationally in society, and how social work can create change by engaging in critical dialogue and analysis of the connections between political/societal issues and personal struggles.

For Freire (1993) and for Boal (1995), there is little distinction between the political, the structural, and the personal. It is similar in anti-oppressive practice in that the “personal is political” (Bishop, 2002) because dominant cultural, societal, and structural practices act on us and impact our relationships, actions, and decision-making. According to Bishop (2002) and Payne (1997), the primary principle of anti-oppressive practice is that power and privilege are constants in our interactions with others. When we feel oppressed, we may have power struggles with others and believe that they are using their “power-over” us. At the same time, we work within policies, procedures, and structures that give us opportunities to have “power-over”

others. According to Danso (2015), “Anti-oppressive practice provides a framework for understanding how difference has often been used to oppress people” (p. 573). Often the challenges and barriers that people face result from structural failings and oppressive social systems rather than in their personal shortcomings.

Social workers using anti-oppressive practice are also interested in how people can overcome oppression using approaches that transform personal and structural relationships. Anti-oppressive practice encourages social workers to understand and believe that clients understand their stories much better than anyone else. The social worker may introduce new types of support, resources, interventions, and opportunities for clients to self-reflect and examine the personal and structural relationship, but the client brings their lived experience and only they know the context of oppression within their lived experience (Bishop; 2002; Danso, 2009).

Anti-oppressive social work practice includes self-reflection, self-awareness and critical consciousness for both the client and the social worker (Danso, 2009; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Social workers need to be self-aware of their practices, beliefs, and values, and how their lens or perspectives shape how they view or engage with their clients. Additionally, a social worker’s practice framework is often shaped by the policies of the agency for which they work, funders’ requirements, their own experiences of oppression, and may be based on their gender, skin colour, and social location (Danso, 2009). Continual self-reflection ensures that social workers are aware of their biases and assumptions. Social workers who are aware of their biases and assumptions will understand how their biases and assumptions impact their relationship and practice with clients.

Encouraging clients to self-reflect helps clients to examine their situation in relation to their sense of self, family members, friends, co-workers, and other connections as well as to

deconstruct their lived experience. Engaging with clients about their constructed reality helps social workers to understand different perspectives about how their client positions themselves within their community and what factors they acknowledge as impacting or shaping their identity within oppression, such as gender, class, cultural or political factors (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). By framing or contextualising their lived experience according to these factors, clients provide social workers with an understanding of whether they can comprehensively support clients to create personal or social change.

When one group believes that they are better than another group, they often employ “power-over” that group by using their advantages against others. It is important to note that someone can feel oppressed by some and still be an oppressor to others. Someone can have a disability, be gay, or be an ethnic minority, but they may use tools or resources at their disposal such as “physical strength, weapons, greater wealth, resources, or information, or greater control of the decision-making and communication mechanisms of society” to have power-over another (Bishop, 2002, p. 84).

Anti-oppressive practice “draws on strengths, assets, and capacities first, rather than a primary focus on problems and limitations” (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006, p. 142). It is also imperative for the person or persons to self-identify whether or not they feel oppressed. It is important that social workers allow individuals and groups to self-determine that they are oppressed. Just because someone is a refugee, jobless, homeless, poor, or using substances, it does not mean that they feel oppressed. A social worker who uses anti-oppressive practices will view the reasons behind the problems as external to an individual (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006). As such, anti-oppressive practices also examine the societal and structural impact on groups as well as individuals.

It is important for the practitioner to have “power-with” rather than “power-over” their clients (Bishop, 2002, p. 104). Power-with allows us, as social workers, to engage individuals and groups as the experts in their own stories, and help clients to empower and uplift themselves and to overcome their oppression. Social workers support clients to be free from oppression (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006) by attempting to change or modify “social policies, programs, institutions, and structures that cause oppression” (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006, p. 200). The practitioner can do this by helping the client to identify their feelings of oppression and providing tools for the client to know whether that oppression is personal, societal, structural, or cultural, as well as providing support and strategies for creating changes; for example, writing letters, giving feedback, and/or sharing their stories.

The pursuit of social justice and social change is one of the paramount goals of social work and is a fundamental aspect of anti-oppressive practice (Campbell, 2003). Within social work and social justice, anti-oppressive practice often includes dialogue and training in cultural competence. While cultural competency is often thought of as distinct from anti-oppressive practice, anti-oppressive practice is a framework that could incorporate an understanding of how difference is used to put people down (Danso, 2015). According to Danso (2015), “Cultural competence commonly refers to the awareness, knowledge, and skills social workers need to develop in order to deliver culturally appropriate services” (Danso, 2015, p. 574). Anti-oppressive practice in social work understands that differences and culture shape people’s behaviours, beliefs, and identity, and social workers link or integrate anti-oppressive practice with cultural competency.

Social workers educated in anti-oppressive practice will use their skills and knowledge to empower vulnerable populations using respectful and culturally appropriate methods where the

practitioner is equal to the client, but the client is the expert about their life and situation. Campbell (2003) suggested that educators prepare social work students to be critical of their cultural assumptions, and to not only celebrate diversity, but also to build or construct alternative cultural values congruent with diversity. Embracing strategies and practices that value the strengths and resiliency of clients rather than focusing on problems will allow practitioners to draw on social change interventions as well as collaborations with individuals and their larger communities (Campbell, 2003; Danso, 2015).

By using anti-oppressive practice, social workers are able to recognise how their clients are oppressed. Clients may feel oppressed because of their gender, immigration status, age, or disability. Social workers using anti-oppressive practice also utilise keen assessment tools to not only identify how their clients are being oppressed, but also to link personal feelings of oppression with the systems that support oppression (Danso, 2009). By establishing personal oppression within the context of the social structures, social workers can better inform their clients of their rights and responsibilities, advocate for clients, and support their clients by building strategies and using tools to acknowledge their strengths and overcome oppression.

3.1.1 Rationale

Because of the broad influences of other theories and ideologies within anti-oppressive theory, social workers could find themselves unsure of best practices and feel conflicted about which theoretical lens fits best for themselves and their clients (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Nonetheless, practitioners could develop practice frameworks within their agencies that include using anti-oppressive practice with vulnerable populations.

As such, a rationale for using anti-oppressive practice is that the practice starts from a foundational level of inclusivity. The fact is anti-oppressive practice posits that social workers

should have power-with their clients, because the client brings their self-knowledge and expertise about their situation, while social workers share skills and knowledge that enable clients to build their capacity and achieve their full potential (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006).

Nevertheless, by using an anti-oppressive framework, social workers have a fuller understanding of clients' concerns and issues. For example, social workers working within immigration and settlement who have knowledge about the impact of immigration policies and how those policies influence the lives of immigrants and refugees, would be able to use their skills to advocate for funding for language classes, integration policies that recognise newcomers' skills, education, and experience (Danso, 2009).

Thus the rationale for using an anti-oppressive practice is that social workers would also be able to advocate for changing systemic and institutional policies that oppress immigrants and refugees and prevent them from feeling equal to members of their host country. Moreover, this theoretical framework emphasises understanding how differences between people and systems oppress individuals and groups. It also encourages social workers to broaden their comprehension of diverse world views, which would enable social workers to assess, understand, and support as well as provide relevant interventions for immigrants and refugees.

An additional rationale is that anti-oppressive practice is also the social work theory most relevant to forum theatre because it aligns with Freire's (1993) notion of building relationships through discourse and cultural experiences. This engagement between the practitioner and the client as well as between clients and community members utilises language, thought, and cultural practice to create change intra-personally. Change then funnels outward from person to person relationships through popular education, or people teaching people, which propels social and structural change. Furthermore, anti-oppressive practice advises social workers to remember that

they enter the relationship with their clients from a position of power. Social workers have “power-over” their clients through the roles of providing service, accountability, and that adherence to agency and funders can override accountability to clients (Danso, 2009).

The use of self-reflection is also a key rationale for connecting anti-oppressive practice to forum theatre because forum theatre utilises games and activities that encourage participants to think critically. In forum theatre, participants question themselves by using their bodies and their feelings to reflect about their choices, their actions, and their decisions in relation to their sense of self and in relation to others around them. As a group, those working together to build forum identify their shared oppression and create dialogue about how to overcome oppression (Diamond, 2007). Just as anti-oppressive practice engages practitioners and clients in social change with the goal to advocate for and lift structural oppression, so too does forum theatre use the identification and dialogue about oppression to develop solutions for and with the larger community.

3.1.2 Limitations

A limitation of anti-oppressive practice is that it is inclusive of different theories, such as feminism, queer, and disability, and is inclusive of various ideologies including Marxism and structuralism (Campbell, 2003; Payne, 1997). Because of the inclusivity of various theories, there may be some misunderstanding about what anti-oppressive practice entails. Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) suggested that anti-oppressive practice needs to be more explicitly defined. Does anti-oppressive practice create a “hierarchy of oppression” (p. 437) when practitioners focus on one form of oppression over another? Is anti-oppressive practice a terminology that means the same as other client-centered practices; does it include sufficient strategies about how to intervene and support families and individuals (Danso, 2009). To answer these questions, uncertainty about

theory and practice can be clarified through critical self-reflection about what social workers believe to be practical and reliable solutions to supporting clients.

Another limitation of anti-oppressive practice is that it is so focused on the structural dynamics of relationship between systems. Most of social work focuses on micro-systems or individual change, while anti-oppressive practice focuses on macro-systems and social or political change. Such a large orientation to overcoming oppression can create stressful situations and doubt within social workers about their ability to successfully support or advocate for their clients (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). The limitation exists because while social workers may want to practice using an anti-oppressive framework, they are often constrained by the very structures that oppress their clients.

As such, it is important that social workers practice reflexively and with critical consciousness about how their limitations impact their practice. Social workers also need to be conscious of how their biases and prejudices and how agency, funders, and systems impact their interactions with clients. By using self-reflection, social workers consider how they would utilise or operationalise anti-oppressive practice into their everyday work since anti-oppressive practice may not be inherent in the policies or mandates of a social service agency. Since self-reflection is such an integral aspect of anti-oppressive practice, social workers should be able to observe themselves and their actions, as well as question their motives and decisions so they engage in empowering interactions with clients.

Social workers who practice with immigrants and refugees have historically adapted theories from fields outside of social work, such as Berry's (1997) acculturation theory from the field of cultural psychology (Sakamoto, 2007). By using the ethno-cultural tools, interventions and strategies that belong to the host culture with immigrants and refugees, social workers

practice assimilation rather than integration with clients from other countries. Anti-oppressive practice encourages social workers to address structural policies that hinder best practices for their clients. Understanding the factors that influence settlement issues of their clients' will help social workers to address oppression at the macro and micro level. In the next section, I will explain acculturation theory as well as other acculturation models other than Berry's (1997).

3.2 Acculturation Theories

Acculturation is based on the process that takes place when people of different cultures connect and changes occur in the cultural make-up of the groups as a result of those connections or interactions (Sakamoto, 2007; Van Oudenhoven & Ward, 2012). Berry's (1997) acculturation model, which he called a 'framework,' attempts to integrate the research on acculturation and on ethnic relations, in which he utilised a central theme of integration or 'multicultural ideology' (Berry, 1999). Berry (2008) defined acculturation as an ongoing process of "cultural and psychological change" (p. 50) that involves all people who live within diverse cultures including immigrants as well as the dominant or mainstream group, or requires two cultural groups to connect (Berry, 2001; Berry 2005).

The individual's wellbeing, which is "psychological adaptation," and their ability to connect and function in society, known as "sociocultural adaptation" (Berry, 2001, p. 17), impacts how immigrants adjust or acclimatise into their new society. According to Berry (2008) and Berry, Phinney, David, and Vedder (2006), all immigrants experience acculturation based on their connection to and maintenance of their original or ethnic culture. Immigrants also experience acculturation built on their willingness to adapt and participate with the various ethno-cultural groups in the country to which they immigrated.

Berry et al. (2006) examined strategies of how acculturation happens. These strategies included ‘assimilation,’ which is when people prefer to intermingle in the larger society rather than maintain their original culture. The second strategy was ‘separation,’ which is identified as an avoidance of interaction with others outside of the previous culture. The third strategy involved ‘marginalisation,’ meaning that the individual neither partakes in maintaining their cultural identity nor in integrating with the larger society. Finally, ‘integration’ occurs when individuals strive to protect their culture as well as involve themselves in the larger society. Berry (2008) also stated that when mainstream society seeks to assimilate immigrants, this is referred to as the ‘melting pot.’ Whereas, by employing separation, it is termed ‘segregation,’ and ‘exclusion’ happens when the mainstream enforces marginalisation. Integration occurs when society acknowledges and normalises diversity, which is referred to as ‘multiculturalism’ (Berry, 2008).

In opposition to the melting pot, Berry (2005) suggested that multicultural societies offer immigrants a more positive settlement experience because their policies promote integration and offer culturally appropriate support in schools or health settings rather than excluding immigrants or imposing cultural change. Berry et al. (2006) explicated about their research on “how immigrant youth acculturate” and adapt “to their acculturation experience” as means of testing if acculturation relates to the differences in adaptation; that is, ‘psychological adaptation’ and ‘sociocultural adaptation’ (p. 306). The research participants were youth, aged 13 to 18, from twenty-six cultures, who resided in thirteen countries, and included both immigrant youth as well as youth born in the country.

The researchers used the person approach, and they defined the use of this approach as when “individuals are grouped into categories on the basis of pattern similarity, such that each

category has a particular set of properties that differentiates it from other categories. In this study, cluster analysis was used to identify patterns of acculturation” (Berry et al., 2006, p. 313). The research team developed scales to assess acculturation attitude, cultural identity, acculturation behaviours, family relationships, perceived discrimination, psychological adaption and sociocultural adaptation.

The structured questionnaires, filled out by the youth, yielded results that outline the distinct ways in which immigrant youth acculturate are based upon how they related to their first cultures and the society into which they settle. The data also revealed that self-esteem, engagement in school, behavioural problems, gender, age, length of time residing in their new country, and parents’ jobs impacted how well immigrant youth adapted. The researchers found that there was a correlation between acculturation strategies and how well immigrant youth adapt, and that retaining the original culture balanced with involvement in the dominant or mainstream society positively affected immigrant youths’ adaptation.

Berry’s (1997) discourse about factors affecting acculturation and application of the knowledge in guiding practice is important because he suggested that these factors are not fixed and could be changed. These factors included group-level acculturation, which affected immigrants because of differences in food, changes in status and employment, language, and shifts in attitudes and beliefs. The factors also included psychological acculturation, which is the impact of having to balance two cultures and the inherent challenges, stresses, and conflicts that happen due to residing within two cultures. Existing factors prior to acculturation also moderately influenced acculturation and included age, gender, education, status, employment, and motivation for migrating.

Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal (1997) acknowledged that Berry's framework is a foundational theory of acculturation. The difference between Berry's acculturation framework and Bourhis et al. is that while Berry's acculturation model focused on the impacts of settlement on immigrants, Bourhis et al. seemed better-rounded by presenting a framework that concentrated on both the host community members as well as immigrants. Bourhis et al.'s (1997) article is not a research study. However, in the article, the authors presented an overview of how host cultures and immigrant groups interact and how those interactions inform immigration and integration policies. Bourhis et al. (1997) noted that the status of immigrants as laid out by the state policies influences acculturation of immigrants into their new society. Bourhis et al. (1997) pointed out that immigrants may need to define themselves in relationship to the host culture's majority populations, as well as in relationship to "indigenous host minorities" (p. 372).

In Berry et al.'s (2006) framework, the researchers wanted to understand how youth acculturate, that is through assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation. Furthermore, they recommend that governments encourage immigrants to pursue integration; however, the onus was on the immigrant to determine how to acculturate. Unlike Berry et al. (2006), it seemed that Bourhis et al. (1997) offered a more realistic view of acculturation by suggesting that the impetus was on both the government or host cultures' policies and on immigrants to determine how to acculturate. Bourhis et al. (1997) proposed that there were four groupings or typologies of state beliefs that influenced how the state or government shapes integration policies. These included pluralism, civic, assimilation, and ethnist ideologies. In pluralism, the state expects immigrants to adopt the values of the host country, and while the state will not interfere in the private lives of its citizens, the state will support and fund private

activities that support cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Civic ideology holds that immigrants adopt the public values of the host culture, but that the state would not restrict the private beliefs of individuals. Also, the state will fund activities promoting the dominant group's beliefs and cultural identity. Assimilation ideology expects immigrants to adopt the public values of the host culture, and also expects that immigrants leave behind their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and fully adopt those of the dominant cultural group.

Lastly, ethnist ideology requires that immigrants adopt the public values of the host culture and provides for the state to "limit the expression of certain aspects of private values, especially those of immigrant minorities" (Bourhis et al., 1997, p. 374). Furthermore, Bourhis et al. (1997) stated that there is much evidence that micro-systems in society, such as the school system or employment (Titzmann & Fuligni, 2015), often have different integration policies than official government policies. These policies also mirror the overriding acculturation position of the dominant host culture. In effect, these various integration policies, and how organisations and services comply with them, impact immigrants' acculturation into society.

Older unidimensional acculturation models showed immigrants adapting to their host culture across a span of time, usually fully immersing themselves into the host culture and leaving their original culture behind (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Titzmann & Fuligni, 2015). The adoption of a bidimensional model of acculturation portrayed immigrant identity within host and heritage cultures as separate entities, where immigrants have to decide how much of their original culture to retain and how much of the host culture to adopt. Furthermore, within a bidimensional framework, immigrants choose how much contact they would have with original and host cultures.

Bourhis et al. (1997) introduced a modification of Berry's acculturation framework called the Interactive Acculturation Model. Bourhis et al.'s (1997) purpose in establishing this model was to present a more cohesive interpretation of both immigrant and host experiences of acculturation. The model ultimately sought to understand the hosts' perspectives about their acceptance of immigrants maintaining their culture of origin or adopting the host community's culture. The model also examined how desirable it is for immigrants to maintain their heritage, to integrate, or adopt the cultural characteristics inherent to the host country.

Bourhis et al. (1997) used the Interactive Acculturation Model to determine the "consensual, problematic and conflictual relational outcomes between immigrants and members of the host community" (Bourhis et al., 1997, p. 384); that is, those relational outcomes that support assimilationist, integration, segregationist, exclusionist, and individualist immigration policies. These relational outcomes depended on the level of agreement between immigrants and host community members, discrimination, acculturative stress, and levels of interaction occurring at systems levels, such as within the school system, housing, or employment.

Ward (2008) also acknowledged that Berry "defined" acculturation. Ward (2008) postulated that by expanding on "identity, acculturation and intercultural relations" (p. 106) we will be able to go beyond Berry's framework of acculturation. Ward suggested there is a broader process and more influences on acculturation than immigrants orienting to either host culture or culture of origin. In fact, there are many multifaceted and underlying reasons for immigrants orienting themselves the way they do, such as language, ethnicity, choice, skill in integrating, or because of concepts of identity (Schwartz et al., 2010): "Ethnic identity refers to the extent to which the person (a) has explored what her or his ethnic group means to her or him (*exploration*) and (b) values and feels attached to her/his ethnic group (*affirmation*)" (p. 11). As such, Ward

(2008) examined the social and individual construct of identity and the impact such constructs have on the process of acculturation.

Ward (2008) co-constructed a measure to validate the Ethno-cultural Identity Conflict Scale. The scale included statements involving identity relative to the person's cultural background; how often people question who they are and their identity; and if and how often a person has conflicting beliefs about themselves. Furthermore, Ward (2008) acknowledged that researchers, according to Berry's framework, theorised that "group-level factors" impact immigrants' experiences of acculturation. Ward also suggested that we need to move beyond the idea that the group, the host culture or the individuals' ethnic group, is wholly responsible for persuading the individual to have a particular acculturation orientation.

Ward (2008) identified research from a graduate student that examined the impacts of the individual on the larger group. She suggested that continued research would be needed to examine the impact of individuals on ethnic and cultural groups over time and possibly over generations. Unlike Berry, who did not look at tourists and sojourners within his framework, Ward stated that tourists provided a great opportunity for researchers to test their theories. Visitors tend to acquire diverse skills to be able to interact effectively within their host culture, and also impact the development of host culture approaches to newcomers depending on "perceived threats and intergroup relations in the context of tourism" (Ward, 2008, p. 111). Overall, Ward (2008) suggested that researchers moving or expanding acculturation theory need to examine acculturation differently, by measuring identity and identity conflict; studying how groups and individuals respond to and impact each other. Researchers also need to examine the long term considerations of those impacts on the ethno-cultural group and the host culture over

generations. Ward (2008) also introduced the idea of examining tourists and their perspectives as a method of expanding and challenging acculturation theories.

While Bourhis et al. (1997) and Ward (2008) examined the idea of expanding on Berry's theoretical model, Ngo (2008) offered a critique. Ngo (2008) called Berry et al.'s (2006) four strategies "bidimensional acculturation" (p. 5), and Ngo (2008) critiqued this acculturation model from two aspects. First, the theory did not critically examine the effect of the dominant culture's power over the immigrant group through the dominant society's structures and policies. Second, the model lacked the ability to consider factors, "e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation," (p. 6) that influence the shifts in an immigrant's identity that occur over time, and how those shifts in identity impact the immigrant's relationship with the dominant culture. In fact, Ngo (2008) suggested that while this school of thought looked at different results of the immigrant experience, it still closely connected to the idea of assimilation.

By utilising a social justice, anti-oppressive lens, Ngo (2008) critically examined acculturation theories and challenged existing frameworks of acculturation, including Berry's theory, which Ngo (2008) stated was "universalist" (p. 2) in that the "stance on acculturation has been responsible for a significant body of theoretical work that denies historically, politically and socially situated realities facing immigrants and fails to explain varying experiences in immigrants' lives" (p. 2). Furthermore, the universalist framework not only decries the unique differences that each individual or group of immigrants experiences, but also does not account for the different ways each immigrant will process their experience. Moreover, Ngo (2008) critiqued many acculturation theorists, such as Milton Gordon and John Berry, for measuring immigrants' experiences of acculturation while standing outside of those experiences. Ngo (2008) suggested that these theorists are often from the dominant culture and do not speak the

immigrants' language, nor do the theorists reflect upon how their work is shaped by their own culture, perspectives, and experiences.

Initially, a first glance at the Interactive Acculturation Model seemed more balanced than either the unidirectional acculturation model or the bidimensional acculturation model because it seemed to look at the way the dominant culture acts upon the immigrant culture and vice versa. In fact, initially the model seemed to determine relational outcomes based on the interaction between the immigrant group's perceptions of how they acculturated, as well as the acceptance the dominant culture had with respect to immigrants holding on to their cultural identity or taking on the dominant culture's identity. In fact, this model is closer to a multi-dimensional acculturation model since it includes the scope of values, beliefs, behaviours and identity (Schwartz et al., 2010). Nevertheless, while Bourhis et al. (1997) do explore the impact of immigrant and integration policies on immigrants, they decline to go further in their study by determining how immigrant groups could inform immigration and integration policies. Furthermore, studies using the Interactive Acculturation Model (Komisarof, 2009; Oerlemans and Peeters, 2010) still measured acculturation primarily from the immigrants' perspective, which provided a one-sided view of acculturation.

3.2.1 Rationale

A rationale for using Bouhris et al.'s (1997) model is that it examines micro-systems (schools, police, housing), and macro-systems (government, social service institutions). Examining how these systems affect the acculturation orientation of immigrants and refugees fits best within scope of this research study. In fact, anti-oppressive social work practice operates through a relational and structural change lens, and challenges the notion of one group having "power-over" another. As such, the Interactive Acculturation Model best suits the context of this

research study because it considers relational outcomes and takes into account the interaction and influences of those interactions on both immigrants and host community members. This research study focused on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth who self-identified as being at-risk youth at some time in their lives. Some youth had no criminal or gang affiliations, or were involved semi-peripherally, while others had greater English language proficiency than others. As such, it is important to acknowledge that a multi-dimensional acculturation orientation existed for these participants because different factors within their lives caused them to acculturate at different levels or within different orientations (Drankus, 2010).

A rationale for using the Interactive Acculturation Model is that forum theatre locates itself well within Bouhris et al.'s (1997) model since a large aspect of Bouhris et al.'s (1997) work pertains to relational outcomes. The first relational outcome is consensual, which is “sharing their acculturation orientations;” the next is problematic, which is “partial agreement and partial disagreement” (p. 383), and conflictual relational outcomes occur where exclusionary and segregationist policies and discrimination occurs. Researchers could use the Interactive Acculturation Model to understand how cultural differences affect inter-group relations.

Oerlemans and Peeters (2010) used the Interactive Acculturation Model to understand how cultural diversity affected the workplace and “if discordance in acculturation orientations impact the quality of intergroup work-relations” (p. 463). The investigators found that discordance was the preferred acculturation strategy of the workers. The researchers examined “blue-collar” workers because they found an overrepresentation of immigrant groups in blue collar jobs. Using the Interactive Acculturation Model, the researchers discovered that increased contact between non-immigrant and immigrant groups at work decreased conflict and increased cooperation.

Another study aimed to mitigate the process of integrating non-Japanese and diverse workers into Japanese organisations (Komisarof, 2009). The study included companies comprised of 70% Japanese employees and 30% non-Japanese (Komisarof, 2009). Using surveys and interviews, the researchers collected and categorised information according to consensual, problematic, and conflictual types. The researchers then ranked acculturative outcomes and correlated the outcomes with the number of years participants lived in Japan, country of origin, and languages spoken. The researchers then provided recommendations about how groups could feel a sense of belonging where they work.

These two studies highlight how interactions and dialogue between immigrants and host community members could increase understanding about tensions, belonging and collaboration. Creating dialogue, increasing contact between groups, and providing community-based solutions are similar outcomes for using forum theatre with immigrant and refugee youth. The concepts of consensual, problematic, and conflictual relational outcomes flow into the use of forum theatre with immigrants and refugees. These concepts play into forum theatre because the dynamic between immigrants and refugees as participants is one in which participants agree about their shared struggle, which causes characters to confront themselves, each other and the audience. The push/pull dynamic or balance of power in relational arguments is important to the process of forum theatre (Diamond, 2007). When conflict occurs, then participants have the capacity to take their story to forum and they can create dialogue about relationships between the host culture and other newcomers.

3.2.2 Limitation

One limitation of current acculturation models is that the focus is often on the immigrant rather than equally on immigrants and the host community members. From the lens of anti-

oppressive practice, it is important to examine how structure creates oppression. As such, practitioners ought to pay attention to how the policies of host countries influence acculturation by focusing equally on immigrants and on host communities. As such, neither the unidimensional model nor Berry's theoretical framework align with anti-oppressive practice.

The framework that this research best aligns with is Bouhris et al.'s (1997) Interactive Acculturation Model. Most models have a one-way lens when looking at acculturation, seeing immigrants as either adapting or not adapting to the host culture, with adaptation along a scale or a continuum. Nevertheless, while Ngo's (2008) assessment seemed correct that Bouhris et al.'s (1997) Interactive Acculturation Model was the most equitable model in terms of the impact of acculturation on both the immigrant culture and the host culture, there are still limitations in using this framework. After reviewing the literature, even Bouhris et al.'s (1997) interactive model focuses a little too much on how the level of acculturation is dependent on the host culture, through the governments' immigration, settlement and integration policies. This acculturation model would align more favourably with anti-oppressive practice if immigrants and refugees participated fully at the policy level in shaping integration processes, as their perspectives would help to create structural changes. However, it is the best-rounded policy in terms of using the model to examine how macro-systems influence individuals and their decisions, and because the model attempts to predict relational outcomes of policies' effects on immigrants and hosts.

Another limitation is that acculturation theorists typically examine acculturation orientation based on language proficiency, integration of cultural behaviours and reports of self-identity (Schwartz et al., 2010; Ward, 2008). However, the idea that acculturation itself is a process that includes different levels of orientation should not be farfetched. Even within one

ethno-cultural group there are different dialects, rituals, and values. Thus, acculturation can occur differently for individuals within one ethno-cultural group or even within one family group.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a brief description of anti-oppressive practice within social work as it relates to the “personal is political.” I also described how anti-oppressive practice often examines oppression at the systems level while encouraging the practitioner to engage in self-reflection and understand that the client is the expert. In this chapter, I also provided a synopsis of Berry’s (1997) acculturation theory as well as some alternatives. Based on Bourhis et al.’s (1997) explanation of integration policies, the Interactive Acculturation Model is relevant to the nature of this study because it showed how integration policies affect acculturation. Therefore, the Interactive Acculturation Model is the closest to anti-oppressive practice.

Anti-oppressive practice is beneficial in the context of my study because it encourages social workers to be self-reflective about their “power over” their clients, and examines and addresses structural oppression as well as inter-personal oppression. As such, anti-oppressive practice fits well with forum theatre since forum theatre also situates itself in the “personal is political.” Social workers who understand how immigrants and refugees settle into their host countries, and how acculturation relates to identity, family systems, and mental health and well-being, use anti-oppressive practice to shape funding, policies, and social services to better support newcomer clients. In my next chapter, I will provide a description of the methodology I used as well the methods employed in conducting the study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The chapter on methodology focuses on how I conducted my research on the impact of forum theatre on immigrants and refugees to Canada who faced adversity as youth. I provide a synopsis of qualitative methodology, including an explication of the generic approach, and an explanation about the study's sampling and recruitment strategies that I used for the study. Following these sections, I explain how I conducted the data analysis portions of this research, as well as how I established trustworthiness using the criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lastly, I explain the ethical considerations associated with the study, thereby demonstrating that the research was conducted with veracity.

4.1 Qualitative Research

I utilised a qualitative research design to conduct my study because the main purpose of a qualitative study is to develop understanding and because this approach “establishes meaning inferentially” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 30), which is relevant when the “entities being studied are human beings” (p. 30). Since the approach relies on information collected from human participants that is transcribed into text, which the researcher then analyzes through multiple steps (Creswell, 2014), the qualitative method was most appropriate to my study.

Paradigms are “a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide [researchers'] inquiries” (Creswell, 1998, p. 74). As such, I was most interested in the post-positivist, also known as naturalistic or qualitative paradigm, which is about developing an “understanding rather than prediction” and “instead of being bent on certainty it is probabilistic and speculative” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 30). Therefore, this approach was the most appropriate to developing an

understanding about how a particular phenomenon, that is, forum theatre, would affect the particular population of at-risk immigrants and refugee youth.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are five axioms in the qualitative paradigm.

1) The qualitative researcher recognises that there are multiple realities, which are created and “holistic;” 2) the respondent and what they know are “interactive” and “inseparable;” 3) hypotheses have to be bound by time and context; 4) causes and effects are constantly influencing each other and so are “indistinguishable,” and 5) the inquirer’s values affect the inquiries, the choice of paradigm, as well as the “substantive theory” guiding the research and the context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37-38). The nature of this qualitative study was to learn about how forum theatre impacts marginalised immigrant and refugee youth. Because of the nature of this study, a qualitative paradigm was the most appropriate because this type of methodology is concerned with understanding how respondents apply or develop meaning or truth to their interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In addition to developing an understanding about how respondents viewed themselves and others during the forum theatre process, a qualitative study enabled me to investigate the respondents’ experiences in detail without being limited by pre-conceived concepts. I was not limited by pre-conceived concepts because I did not create groups or categories of analysis prior to the data collection stage, which is an activity that is dominant in positivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). A qualitative study was also the most practical approach since there were gaps in the literature regarding the utilisation and impact of forum theatre with immigrant and refugee youth. There is limited research in English that explores forum theatre and immigrant and refugee youth, particularly with this population group in Canada. Since qualitative research provides depth through examining broader information, it was the

appropriate choice to garner insight about the phenomenon and the impressions the respondents had about how it impacted their lives. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the impacts of forum theatre on immigrant and refugee youth; as such, this study contributes knowledge through a generic approach that is appropriate to cultural studies.

4.1.1 Generic Approach

In qualitative studies, generic approaches are becoming more frequent to the field of exploratory research. Various authors describe generic qualitative research as “noncategorical,” “basic or fundamental qualitative description” or “descriptive qualitative research” (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2003, p. 2.). There is also increasing examination about how current qualitative research meets the criteria of traditional methodologies like phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory (Kahlke, 2014), since many qualitative studies deviate from established procedures and rules. Researchers using the qualitative approach may combine various techniques from different methodologies.

Constructivist theory, that humans construct their worldview from their subjective/emotional responses to situations in their realm, shaped most qualitative approaches. “The central aim of research is knowledge development” (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2003, p. 4). Humans construct their knowledge based on their perception of the world. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Methods* (Given, 2008) suggested that many qualitative approaches line up with constructivism. Given (2008) stated that these approaches “disallow the existence of an external objective reality independent of an individual from which knowledge may be collected or gained. Instead, each individual constructs knowledge and his or her experience through social interaction” (p. 116). Since the generic approach is located within a constructivist epistemology, a researcher’s perception of an individual’s interpretation of their experience

affects the constructed paradigm within the research. The main motive of any study is to understand the respondent's perception of their experiences and use methods that focus on interpreting those experiences (Smith, Bekker, & Cheater, 2011).

Examining the context and the social constructs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) of the youths' experiences, reflecting on the process of the forum theatre, as well as the research process itself helped me examine the information collected through a multi-faceted lens; that is, the lens of looking at factors that affected immigrant and refugee youth, their experiences settling in Canada, participation in forum theatre as an individual and with peers who were immigrants as well as at-risk or marginalised in some way, and the experience of sharing personal narratives to an audience who interacted or intervened with different outcomes from the youths' real life.

In a generic approach, researchers usually use maximum variation sampling (defined in section on sampling), data is usually collected using semi-structured interviews, and analysed using content analysis (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Kahlke, 2014). Nevertheless, one criticism of generic qualitative research is that it neglects to utilise a single "methodological or theoretical framework," (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 6) which may potentially cause discrepancies in data. The reason for this criticism is due to researchers who use generic qualitative methodology without having a set of standardised measurements for data collection and data analysis (Caelli et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2011). Despite this criticism, researchers understand that qualitative approaches evolve from many different and constantly changing "understandings of the world and the nature of humanity, there are many different standpoints from which to evaluate qualitative research" (Caelli et al., 2003, p.8) and as such they cannot have one standard way of collecting and analysing data. Each study's value is the basis for judging the effectiveness of the qualitative methodology.

Therefore, in generic qualitative research the reader of the study evaluates the efficacy of the research based on their review of the methods and approaches used. Because of this criticism, researchers may spend an inordinate amount of time endorsing their use of certain methods, which may result in inadequate details about the results of the study. As such, Caelli et al. (2003) suggested that in a generic approach it is not important to know the origin of a particular, methodology “as long as they are congruent with the question and purpose of the research” (p. 13). Kahlke (2014) criticised the idea that it is unimportant to know the origin of the methodologies because by blending tools and techniques and straying from accepted guidelines, method-slurring could occur. However, Kahlke (2014) acknowledged that the generic approach works well if the researcher ensures “congruence” throughout the study. Kahlke (2014) explained congruence as the connections researchers make between theories and methodologies as well as links between “techniques and procedures” (p. 45).

Reflexivity is a key part of the research process within a generic approach. It is important for the researcher to know and relate their theoretical position, understand their beliefs and values, and how those shape the study (Caelli et al., 2003; Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Caelli et al. (2003) suggested that it was “undesirable” and impossible for researchers to put aside or “bracket” their preconceptions and assumptions about their motives. By being reflexive, researchers are also able to establish rules and guidelines for how the study is implemented or evaluated (Caelli et al., 2003), recognise their biases, and follow ethical considerations. As such, reflexivity will help researchers make clear decisions about the process and address the challenges of using a generic approach (Kalkhe, 2014).

4.2 Reflexivity and Position

Reflexivity is an integral part of qualitative research, since through it, the researcher considers aspects of self; e.g. race, gender, dis/ability, and the impact of those “personal, contextual, and circumstantial aspects” (Berger, 2015, p. 221) on the methodology, the responses of the respondents, and the interpretation of the findings. As a researcher, I understand that reflexivity influences all stages of the qualitative inquiry. Ultimately, posing the problem or question for study is influenced by the time, place, situation, and context in which I live (Berger, 2015; Mruck & Breuer, 2003).

In fact, the reason I chose to examine the impact of forum theatre on at-risk youth is because I spent years facilitating or ‘joking’ forum theatre events here in Calgary with aboriginal, immigrant, or refugee youth, and in Trinidad as a volunteer with abandoned, traumatised, or gang-involved young people. I often supported at-risk youth to build skills and overcome their barriers through community development projects, and then used the arts, particularly *Theatre of the Oppressed* or forum theatre. I utilised forum theatre with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth, in which they created diverse plays about issues such as settlement problems, drinking, or being bullied.

Throughout my reflexive process, I determined to “seriously consider my responsibilities to those who agreed to be part of my study” (Watt, 2007, p. 88) since my relationships with, and perceptions of, the respondents would influence the outcome of my study. By keeping a journal, I was able to identify biases towards certain participants; for example, I thought one participant was affiliated with gangs because of the way he dressed. I was also surprised that one participant who dressed well and had a post-secondary degree was a gang member when he was in high school. I previously worked with the parent of one of the respondents, and while this relationship

eliminated the need for prolonged engagement, I was cognisant of my responsibility to maintain my role as a researcher and my duty to this respondent to follow ethical procedures such as maintaining confidentiality and not sharing any information with the respondent's parent.

I also wanted to understand my power over the respondents as a researcher (Watt, 2007). I did not want to influence their answers or guide their reflective process. Furthermore, since forum theatre is an anti-oppressive practice, I was especially concerned with how to maintain the integrity of anti-oppressive practice while being a researcher with power to ask questions. I recognised that by the very nature of creating a semi-structured interview guide, I possessed influence over the respondents by posing the questions; thus, stimulating their thought processes. I placed limitations on my power over the respondents by encouraging them to focus on their experiences, and creating a flexible interview situation by conducting interviews in a safe, convenient space, and leaving the questions open-ended. The interviews enabled the respondents to share rich, meaningful stories about their settlement experiences and their participation in forum theatre.

Since reflexivity is one of the "possible resources for increasing knowledge" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 10), I also considered how my personal background and lived experiences would allow me to increase my knowledge. I reflected about whether or not the fact that I immigrated to Canada would influence my interactions with the respondents, my data collection, or my interpretations of the data. All of the respondents assumed I was from their culture of origin or from a similar ethnic background. The Filipino respondents asked if I was Filipina, the Spanish respondent thought I was Spanish, and the others identified me as Asian or South East Asian. I recognised that the respondents desired a personal connection with me, as a way to create a safe space where they could share their stories without judgement.

The respondents wanted to know that I “understood their journey, feelings, thoughts, and reactions” (Berger, 2015, p. 225). I wanted the respondents to share relevant information, so I ensured that I did not ask invasive or intrusive questions while I provided a space, a connection, and understanding for the respondents to offer in-depth stories about themselves. As a result of my immigrant experience when I was eleven years old, I believe that experiencing settlement provided me with insight and a unique perspective about how the respondents in my study lived and experienced their settlement into Canadian society. My acculturation or adaptation into Canadian society differed from the respondents’ experiences because they were older when they arrived in Canada, spoke another language, and had two parent families.

Nevertheless, they were also financially at-risk, and as the child of a single parent who worked multiple jobs or long hours, I could relate. Also, just as I had, all of the respondents had to learn how to belong to a new school and to a new culture. And while I did not speak a different language, certainly my lexicon and accent were different from my classmates and peers, including family members who were born in Canada. I refused to “assimilate” in an effort to maintain my identity with my culture of origin and often felt “marginalised” (Berry et al., 2006).

Mruck and Breuer (2003) stated that subjective understanding of the processes and relationship between the researcher and the respondent, aligned with rules of research, allow for improved interpretation of data. Therefore, sharing my immigrant identity with the respondents positively aided me in my data collection and data analysis. Upon first entering into this research, I thought that being from another country would not influence the study, and I was more concerned that I had biases that forum theatre was a positive, successful, anti-oppressive strategy. I was careful about crafting the interview questions to include asking about the disadvantages of forum theatre. I constantly reflected about the interview process, the data I

collected, and the next steps in the process. I reviewed the recordings and my notes to ensure that I did not influence or bias the respondents' answers.

Through a reflexive process of exploring my thoughts, emotions, concerns, and anxiety about my biases, I discovered that my personal experience and understanding of forum theatre allowed me to understand the specifics that the respondents shared, such as the fact that audience intervention is atypical to other forms of theatre and necessary to a successful forum theatre event. Because the respondents assumed that I was familiar with forum theatre, they spent the time speaking about their participation in forum theatre and reflecting about the process, instead of spending time explaining forum theatre to me. I was able to collect data about their experiences and insights.

Based on my understanding that forum theatre opens the “consciousness” (Freire, 1993) and becomes the real world for the player or actor (Boal, 1995), I understood that the respondents revealed their personal narrative as they shared about participating in forum theatre. They trusted that I knew and they shared deeply. As a result of my knowledge of forum theatre, I did understand and I did not need to interrupt the respondent to enquire about forum theatre processes; rather, the narrative or lived experience was central to the interview. Approaching “the study with some knowledge” (Berger, 2015, p. 223) of the immigrant experience and of forum theatre allowed me to probe for clarification, as well as to “truly understand and convey” the truth of the respondents' experiences (p. 223).

4.3 Sampling

In qualitative inquiry, purposive sampling is intended to purposively discover in-depth understanding about a particular situation using relatively small samplings (Patton, 2002).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) explained that “even a simple random sample is representative in the

sense that every element in the population has an equal chance of being chosen” (p. 200). The sampling strategies that I used were criterion and maximum variation, which are the sampling strategies commonly used in the generic approach (Kalkhe, 2014). Criterion sampling intends that the sample meets pre-selected conditions (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling is a purposive sampling strategy that looks for themes and patterns that emerge, and is beneficial when seeking shared experiences or similarities between events and situations (Patton, 2002).

The reason that I chose maximum variation sampling was to ensure that I collected information that added to or complemented the information I collected from previous interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, in addition to sending out notices, contacting immigrant serving agencies and various organisations, I also asked the respondents to nominate people they knew for the study, since recruiting a small number of key respondents in this way allowed me to “extend, test, and fill in information” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) using additional sample units (Patton, 2002). As such, I paid attention to recruiting a diverse sample based on age, gender, ethnic background, religious, work and educational background, and experiences with various at-risk behaviours or challenges to being immigrant and refugee youth in Calgary.

4.3.1 Recruitment

I recruited six individuals who participated in the study. The respondents were knowledgeable about the struggles that immigrant and refugee youth face, as well as how forum theatre processes work. I used recruitment notices circulated by immigrant serving agencies, arts-based organisations, the Faculty of Social Work, and other organisations to gather the sample in this study. Initially, I submitted letters to contacts at immigrant serving agencies and arts-based organisations to recruit respondents through agency networks and affiliations. I then spoke with

executive directors, professors, and immigrants and refugees on the telephone to provide a verbal explanation of my study. These supporters circulated the recruitment notice as well as provided my contact information to potential respondents.

The respondents that I recruited met the following criteria: 1) They were either an immigrant or refugee residing in Canada; 2) they participated in forum theatre between the ages of 15 and 30; 3) they were 18 years and older at the time of the interview, and 4) they were able to conduct the interviews in English. I provided the research respondents with a \$50 honorarium to help them with living expenses such as parking, child care, or lost work hours while they attended the interview.

4.3.2 Demographic Information of Participants

I collected demographic information after the interviews and recorded the information on the demographic information sheet on Appendix D. I gathered the demographic information with the intent to develop a profile of the study's respondents. Therefore, I asked questions about the respondents' background so I could identify the many factors that created barriers to immigrants and refugees in Canada, as well as to acknowledge issues that may shape the respondents' insights about their experiences with forum theatre. The respondents in my study were from diverse cultural backgrounds, had completed different levels of education as well as had various experiences in their education and work life at the time of the interview. The following table contains the respondents' self-identified demographic information:

Table 4.1: Demographic Information

Table 4.1 <i>Demographic Information</i>	
Demographics	# of Participants
Refugee	2
Immigrant	4
Female	2
Male	4
Canadian Nationality	2
Chinese Nationality	1
Filipino Nationality	3
From Guatemala (Hispanic)	1
From China (Chinese)	1
From Saudi Arabia (Arab)	1
From Philippines (Filipino & South Pacific Islander)	3
Age 17 (At Time of Forum)	1
Age 18 (At Time of Forum)	2
Age 19 (At Time of Forum)	1
Age 20 (At Time of Forum)	1
Age 23 (At Time of Forum)	1
Age 21 (Now at Interview)	1
Age 22 (Now at Interview)	2
Age 23 (Now at Interview)	1
Age 26 (Now at Interview)	1
Age 36 (Now at Interview)	1
Dropped out of School (At Time of Forum)	1
Completed High School (At Time of Forum)	3
Some University (At Time of Forum)	1
Bachelor Degree (At Time of Forum)	1
Unemployed (At Time of Forum)	3
Employed Part-time (At Time of Forum)	3
Employed Full-time (At Time of Forum)	0
Unemployed (Now at Interview)	1
Employed Part-time (Now at Interview)	3
Employed Full-time (Now at Interview)	1

4.4 Data Collection

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, based on the notion that interviews are interactive and collaborative processes, to collect in-depth information that is textual and

detailed (Grinnell, Jr., & Unrau, 2008). The reason I chose the semi-structured interview style was because I was able to ask open-ended, pre-formulated questions, which I created with the support of my supervisor. Using semi-structured interviews to collect data meant that I was able to collect “rich, relevant data” (Given, 2008). I will speak about semi-structured interviews later on in this chapter. Please see Appendix E for the semi-structured interview guide.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “data collected from an interview can be recorded in any of several ways” (p. 271), including tape recordings and hand-written documentation. To ensure that I would be able to review and transcribe the interview, I used a digital voice recorder to record the audio interviews and made subsequent written notes before, during, and after the interview. My notes focused on key words and phrases during the interviews, which enabled me to comment on observations, reactions, and reflect on possible biases after the interview during my journaling process.

4.4.1 Interview

The purpose of conducting interviews was to gain insights about the feelings, impetuses, and issues, as well as to learn about how the respondents experienced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) forum theatre. Interviews are meant to obtain “*here-and-now constructions* of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns and other entities” (p. 268). Furthermore, “interviews can be categorized further by their degree of *structure*, their *degree of overtness*, and the *quality of the relationship* between the interviewer and respondent” (p. 268).

I chose to use a semi-structured interview to provide some guidance in collecting data I did not know about forum theatre. I also conducted overt interviews, which means that all of the respondents chose to participate, signed consent forms, and were completely aware of the purpose of the interviews. Furthermore, I conducted a “rapport interview” in which I, as the

interviewer, was “the interviewer is a ‘human-being-in-a-role’ and ensured that the interview ran with full disclosure about how the information would be used and for what it was needed, a criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Relaying to the respondents that their perspectives and stories were valuable and would contribute to a broader understanding turned out to be an integral aspect of conducting the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Highlighting that their stories were important and would play a role in increasing knowledge about forum theatre and the experience of immigrants and refugees enabled me to engage more deeply about challenging issues explored within the interviews. As such, I completed semi-structured interviews with individual respondents.

The interviews ranged from forty-six minutes in length to one hour and thirty-one minutes in length. I conducted the interviews over a three month period in 2011. For the convenience of the respondents, I interviewed the youth at convenient, safe, and confidential settings within Calgary. These settings were appropriate to conducting a qualitative study, because these settings allowed me to help the respondents be comfortable about sharing their realities while maintaining confidentiality for them. Furthermore, alternative locations were not only conveniently close to the respondents’ homes and work, but also provided neutral ground for participants who still feared known gangs because of their past criminal affiliations.

4.4.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

While the structured interview relies on the interviewer to ask questions and the unstructured interview relies on the respondent for both the questions and answers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the semi-structured interview lies in between, neither assuming that the interviewer has all the knowledge, or that they have no knowledge about the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In conducting this qualitative study, the semi-structured interview provided a basic guide

to maintain the purpose of the interview while remaining open and flexible to the respondents' answers, which would be influenced by the time, context, and relationship between the interviewer and respondent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The primary reason for the interview was to learn about the impact of forum theatre on immigrant and refugee youth. I used the semi-structured interviews to develop an understanding about the background of the youth prior to their involvement in forum theatre, to learn about how they became involved in the forum theatre process, and what their experience of forum theatre taught them about themselves, as well as the impact it had on their lives. Through semi-structured interviews, I was able to gain insight into the youths' constructed realities within their lived experiences as immigrant youth who had difficulties settling in Canada, felt marginalised, and who voluntarily participated in a type of theatre that re-constructed their personal and social narratives. The youths' responses to the semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect rich data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that I later analysed. Although I asked that the respondents to be available for a period of one and a half hours, the average length of time for the interviews was fifty-three minutes.

4.5 Data Analysis

My source of data was interviews, so I decided to undertake inductive data analysis, which is similar to content analysis, "a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). I utilised the technique of coding, where I transformed the information from the interviews into meaning units or "pieces of information that stand by themselves;" (p. 203); that is, the reader could interpret the meaning unit without any extra information. However, since the qualitative paradigm departs from conventional content analysis "in several important ways, including the timing of rule formation, need for a

priori guiding theory (and deduced categories), utility of generalizable findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 338), I utilised the constant comparison method in inductive analysis.

The process of constant comparison is an ongoing and simultaneous process of developing theory and processing data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I initially intended to conduct data analysis throughout the interviewing process, since Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that “integration of the theory is more likely to emerge by itself” (p.343), which guides the collection of data in the following interviews. I chose to utilise the constant comparison approach, borrowed from grounded theory, because by comparing and contrasting the data, I was able to develop insights, if not an emergent theory, about the similarities and differences in how the respondents experienced forum theatre and the impact of forum theatre on their lives. The primary tool in data analysis for grounded theory is constant comparison.

Grounded theory is a methodology that produces concepts that apply explanations about peoples’ insights, perspectives, and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comparing and contrasting includes creating categories, defining the rules of those categories, allocating the categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the pieces of the data to those categories, and summarising the data within the categories (Boeije, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I analysed data inductively by categorising, coding, differentiating categories and looking for connections between categories.

Using open coding, I divided the data into sections, and then I looked for common elements, such as particular words or phrases, which reflected themes. I then moved on to the second process of axial coding; by inductively examining the data, I discovered how categories connected or related to each other. Through selective coding, I re-read the transcripts to ensure saturation occurred and that I sufficiently incorporated connections between the data to the

relevant categories (Given, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). In this way, I was able to reflect on questions I had about how I interpreted the data, set boundaries to my categories, and find relationships between categories. I then analysed the data again, comparing each analysis with new data (Boeije, 2002). Additionally, I took notes, reviewed the recordings, and reflected on the transcribed interviews to gain insight about emerging themes.

Although the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to create more focus as an interviewer with each successive interview, exploring emerging themes as they appeared, and yet retain the flexibility and some freedom of an unstructured interview by giving the respondents the opportunity to share their experiences. I transcribed the first three interviews using MS Word, and hired a transcriptionist to transcribe the fourth and fifth interviews. Due to unexpected illness of the transcriptionist, I completed the transcription on the fifth interview, and transcribed the sixth interview. I reviewed the transcription of the fourth interview, which was completed by the transcriptionist, who had signed a confidentiality agreement prior to taking on the work.

All transcriptions are verbatim. Transcribing the interviews, reviewing my field notes, “optically scanning materials” and “sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information” (Creswell, 2014, p. 197) helped me to prepare for the data analysis. After I completed all transcriptions, I identified meaning units for the first transcript, then the second, then the third. I categorised meaning units after identifying them in the first transcript and recorded them. Using the constant comparative method, I outlined the parameters of each category. My purpose in outlining the parameters for each category was to “make it possible to write a rule for the assignment of incidents to categories that will eventually replace tacit judgements of ‘look-alikeness’” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 342).

Continuing the analysis on each transcript, I re-defined the rules for several of the categories, adding meaning units as needed, until by the sixth transcript no new meaning units emerged. As an example of re-defining the rules, my first rule allowed for separate categories of goal setting, personal development, interpersonal skills, and others, and when I re-defined the rule to ‘any skill that allows the youth to move forward in their life, patience, personal development, public speaking, goal setting’ will be included under the sub-theme Life Skills, I was able to “provide a comprehensive, useful, and universally applicable definition” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p 342) to that category. This was the first level stage of coding.

During the second level stage, I reviewed the categories to ensure that duplications or overlaps did not occur, and further subdivided some of the categories to reveal relationships between themes, sub-themes, and categories. When I had arrived at a saturation of categories, I reviewed the transcripts again to ensure that I had exhausted my sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 350), and ensured that the data analysis was complete, so as to be methodological in determining that the categories best fit with the respondents experiences. During the third level stage, I looked at relationships between the themes and began to describe my interpretations. I kept notes to help me understand those relationships through thoughts and impressions. I created diagrams to explain the relationship between the themes, sub-themes, and categories.

Please see Appendix G for the Results Diagrams

4.6 Establishing Trustworthiness

The “basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade their audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Trustworthiness is contingent on quality data collection and data analysis, which hinges on protecting research respondents and developing trust with them,

ensuring the integrity of the research, and conducting the study with faithfulness to proper qualitative methods and ethical considerations (Creswell, 2014).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four characteristics that are imperative to helping the researcher to establish trustworthiness. They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and are summarised below:

- 1. Credibility:** Credibility is having confidence that the findings are true. Lincoln and Guba (1985) made suggestions for researchers to ensure that findings are credible, such as peer debriefing; that is, the process of “exposing oneself” (p. 308) to peers is important in helping the researcher be credible. I engaged in peer debriefing with my supervisor. In addition, activities that help to produce credible findings were “prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation” (p. 301).
 - a.** Prolonged engagement; that is, situating oneself within the site long enough to build trust, rapport and dispel undue and unwarranted attention. I was familiar with the agencies through which I recruited respondents, having worked, volunteered, and participated in events at those organisations, which dismissed the need for a prolonged engagement. Youth were also referred by people they trusted, and with whom I had previously worked, which also dismissed the need for a prolonged engagement.
 - b.** Persistent observation is meant to “identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (p. 304); thus, providing depth to the study. To ensure that I properly practiced persistent observation, I engaged in

reflexive practice by constantly questioning and being reflective about my approach as well as the demands of agency and respondents.

- c. Triangulation: I adhered to contextual validation; that is, I developed an understanding of the source by comparing the evidence provided by each respondent with information provided by other respondents and agency staff, and by having at least one person verify the data collected for anomalies or distortion.

As the interviewer, I was the instrument for gathering the data; by making inquiries, I invited the respondents to share their experiences as marginalised immigrant and refugee youth as well as their experiences of and reflections about forum theatre. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher's judgements or ability to assess relevance of data is essential. Therefore, the credibility of this study is linked to how believable I am as a researcher. Credibility was also established through the use of a journal throughout this study. The following is an excerpt from my journal:

May 5, 2012 – On Data Analysis

I'm a little scared and uncertain about this process. Dave (thesis supervisor) gave me some information about how to do the data analysis correctly; i.e. themes, sub-themes, categories, and quotes.

I want to ensure that I identify both the abstract as well as the concrete during this process. After much thought, and based on the outline that Dave has provided, I will do different levels of coding.

The first level will be to identify concrete concepts within the transcripts and the second level will be to interpret the meanings I find in the data. I believe that I will do well with this process as I'm very interested in what meanings are submerged in the text. I hope that my interpretations of the data will be unbiased as well as provide richness in answering the question effectively.

2. Transferability means that the findings in my study could apply to people outside of my original group of respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability means that

other researchers, readers, or social workers would be able to determine if the results of my study would be applicable to other people. I was aware that it was my responsibility to “provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers” (p. 316), and for providing as much information as possible. Therefore, I provided as much description as possible about the data collected and the interpretations of the data to make for a “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell (1998) explained that a thick description “allows for the reader to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 203) and that helps the reader to decide if the results can be applied elsewhere.

3. Dependability means that the study’s findings are consistent over time and across research studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher shows that their study is dependable by maintaining an audit trail such as a journal, field notes, and recordings of interviews. To ensure that this study was dependable, I engaged in communication with my supervisor to ensure that he was able to “authenticate” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 317) my accounts of my interactions with the respondents, ensuring that I fairly represented their points of view.

I e-mailed and met with my supervisor and received relevant feedback about the data as well as how to code and analyse it. Furthermore, my supervisor provided feedback at each stage of the study about how to progress effectively.

4. Confirmability means that the study reflects the participants’ experiences without significant interference from the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and

Guba (1985) suggested that the practice of keeping a reflexive journal as well as triangulation works for establishing confirmability. Furthermore, my supervisor was able to act as an auditor by checking the raw data, reviewing field notes, looking at the findings and conclusions, as well as checking process notes throughout by exploration of some or all interview transcripts, and a check of the final dissertation.

I kept a journal in which I noted my thoughts about what the respondents shared as well as observations I had before, during, and after the interviews. I also reflected about questions I should have asked as well as what biases and conceptions prevented me from following a line of inquiry. By reflecting on the results of the coding, I was able to identify factors affecting youth and the impact of forum theatre. The following is an excerpt from my journal, where I reflected on potential biases:

November 11, 2011 – Biases and Preconceptions

I got so much information from (Joe) that I'm excited to do the analysis. I have to say, though, that I had some pre-conceptions that (Joe) was more of the straight and narrow. It was a surprise to me that he was involved in a group that is a known gang. I also had a perception that (Joe) would be more outspoken about the barriers than he was. It took some subtle digging for me to find out from (Joe) about the fact that his settlement into life in Canada was not as easy as he initially made it out to be.

I am, at this point, thoroughly biased about how positively forum theatre impacts youth to develop confidence, reflect, develop understanding of others and self, and could be a useful tool to stimulate not only self-reflection and change. I am trying very hard, speaking to myself and slowing down the interviews, as well as asking in different ways, about the disadvantages and negatives of forum theatre because I do not want my bias to be the sum of the research and to limit me in finding out as much pertinent information as possible. I am trying to be as objective and impartial as I could be during the interview. I realised that in trying to be objective during this interview, I didn't check in with (Joe) about if he had been done speaking about the advantages of forum theatre. Thank goodness he interrupted me when I asked about the disadvantages of forum theatre and that he was assertive to say that he needed speak more about the advantages. I think that sometimes because I'm so concerned about asking about both possible impacts – the positives and negatives, I could easily give more credence to disadvantages or seek more than is needed in trying to be objective.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are outlined similarly in books on qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). Since I conducted this research study with immigrant and refugees who, at the time they participated in forum theatre were marginalised youth, it was extremely important to circumvent any factors that would cause them harm. To that end, I followed ethical principles in that I collected all data only after I developed procedures that the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary reviewed and approved.

Seven respondents contacted me via the internet, one respondent sent me a text message, and another respondent overheard my explanation about my thesis and through in-person conversation we were able to identify them as a potential candidate. I e-mailed the respondents after their initial inquiry or called them to provide an explanation about interview process. After determining who was qualified to participate in this study, I explained to the respondents the nature of the study, and the consent process and confidentiality to each respondent before I interviewed them.

I also explained that I would protect the identity of each of the respondents and ensure their right to privacy. Despite the fact that no respondent withdrew from the study, I advised all the respondents of their rights to be able to do so at any time. It was also important that I maintained confidentiality about my knowledge of the respondents beyond the information collected during the interview process, which I have done.

4.8 Chapter Summary

I conducted this research study based on qualitative research methods described in this chapter. I presented rationale for using a qualitative research design to explore the impacts of forum theatre on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. The firm adherence to ethics and ensuring

trustworthiness along with following clear sampling and data collection procedures and using the constant comparison method as outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985) strengthened this study. In analysing the data, I arrived at two themes for factors affecting youth and subsequent sub-themes and categories, and produced two themes for impacts of forum theatre, including relevant sub-themes and categories. I present the results of the data analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the results from the interviews I conducted with the research respondents who self-identified as being at-risk youth and between ages 15 to 30 when they participated in forum theatre. I present a profile of the respondents, and the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged through the data analysis in Table 1. I then provide an explication of the themes through direct quotations from the respondents.

5.1 Profile of the Respondents

Four out of the six respondents were male and two were female; they provided pseudonyms of 2 Letters, Joe, Lei, Bob, Ellen, and Ann. Note that 2 Letters, Bob, Ellen, and Ann were immigrants, while Joe and Lei were former refugees. The ages of the respondents ranged from 22 to 36 at the time they participated in the interviews, with the mean age of 25. When they participated in forum theatre, the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 20, with a mean age of 19 at the time they participated in forum theatre. When the respondents were participants in forum theatre, Ellen dropped out of high school, Joe, Bob and 2 Letters completed high school, Lei was attending university, Ann completed a university degree in her home country, and Joe and Bob were working part-time.

During the time I recruited respondents, there were forum theatre events; however, the participants were creating plays about mental health issues, or participants were from mainstream or aboriginal communities, and were either younger than 12 years or adults. At the time I conducted my research, there were no forum theatre events in which at-risk immigrant and refugee youth participated. As a result, I recruited respondents who were at-risk immigrant and refugee youth between 15 and 30 years-old when they participated in forum theatre.

The respondents in my study participated in forum theatre for different reasons. 2 Letters participated in a community development program where youth had a choice about choosing an art form that would convey their stories to their larger community. 2 Letters and his group chose forum theatre. Bob and Ellen participated in a youth program through an immigrant-serving agency. During the youth program, the youth had to build projects and raise funds for a charity of their choice. Bob, Ellen, and their fellow youth chose to create a forum theatre event where they could talk about serious issues like isolation, bullying, and abuse, after which audience members could contribute a donation should they wish to.

Ann also participated in a youth program in which the youth wanted to help Canadians understand about settlement issues. Ann and two other youth, out of the twenty-two in the youth program, decided that forum theatre would be the best way to start a dialogue about the challenges with which newcomers to Canada struggle. Joe wanted to have a new and dynamic experience upon entering college. He had never participated in theatre before, and was curious about the art form. Observing forum theatre for the first time led Joe to feel inspired and ask new questions about himself. He decided to take the opportunity to participate in forum theatre whenever it arose. Eventually, Joe became not only a participant but also a facilitator of forum theatre for his peers at college. Lei felt restricted and limited by his parents, and when he learned about forum theatre and how open it was to every person, he participated in forum theatre during his first year of university to find out more about his own growth and ability to face new challenges.

2 Letters identified himself an artist. Immediately after he participated in forum theatre, 2 Letters joined a program for at-risk youth to learn about graphic design and videography. He co-created a short-film on homelessness in Calgary and currently pursues graphic design,

photography, and other art forms. Joe decided that as a former at-risk youth, he would have a unique perspective working with vulnerable populations. Eventually, Joe pursued a career in social work. Lei told me that although he has visual impairments, he does not allow them to impede his success. He is currently an undergraduate student. Bob is a family man. He believes in hard work and life balance. His top priority is being present for his child. Ellen shared that she was a former at-risk youth who wanted to change her life. She gained a degree in criminal justice and plans to be a police officer. Ann has a degree in economics from her home country, and would like to eventually pursue her Master degree. For now, Ann supports vulnerable women and works in administration.

5.2 The Themes

Through coding and analysing the data, which I explained in the previous chapter, themes emerged that captured the factors that affected the immigrant and refugee youth and the impacts of forum theatre on youth. There were two main themes for factors affecting youth, Risk Factors and Protective Factors, and two main themes for impacts of forum theatre on youth, which were Benefits and Disadvantages. A list of the sub-themes and categories that emerged in relation to the main themes are in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1 *Summary of the Results*

Factors Affecting Youth
Theme 1: Risk Factors
Sub-theme 1: Settlement Issues
Category 1: Cultural Differences
Category 2: Miscommunication/Misunderstanding
Category 3: Education/School Differences
Sub-theme 2: Heavy Emotions
Category 4: Anxiety & Depression
Sub-theme 3: Isolation/Not Belonging
Sub-theme 4: Risky Behaviour

Category 5: Substance Use
Category 6: Poor Decision-making
Category 7: Criminal Behavior/Involvement
Sub-theme 5: Low Self-Esteem
Category 8: Peer Pressure
Sub-theme 6: Financial Need
Sub-theme 7: Family Strife
Theme 2: Protective Factors
Sub-theme 8: Social Supports
Category 10: School
Category 11: Family
Category 12: Work
Sub-theme 9: Hope
Impacts of Forum Theatre
Theme 1: Benefits
Sub-theme 1: Relates to Real Life
Sub-theme 2: Social Supports
Sub-theme 3: Developing Self-confidence
Sub-theme 4: Positive Experience
Category 1: The Process
Category 2: Safe & Supportive
Sub-theme 5: Reflecting
Category 3: Gaining Insight
Category 4: Self-actualisation/Personal Growth
Sub-theme 6: Processing Heavy Emotions
Sub-theme 7: Communication
Sub-theme 8: Life Skills
Sub-theme 9: Accountability/Responsibility
Sub-theme 10: Overcoming Isolation/Acceptance
Sub-theme 11: Hope
Sub-theme 12: Performing
Sub-theme 13: Benefit to Others
Theme 2: Disadvantages
Sub-theme 14: Reflecting
Sub-theme 15: Anxiety
Sub-theme 16: Incomplete Process

5.3 Factors Affecting Youth

5.3.1 Theme 1: Risk Factors

As newcomers to Canada, all of the respondents identified moments of difficulty. These difficulties impacted their lives, feelings, relationships, and their choices. I identified risk factors that emerged in seven sub-themes with eight categories, which I address below:

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Settlement Issues

All of the respondents spoke about their first experiences of being in Canada. A first set of themes that emerged were about settling into Canadian life. The themes of settlement issues included cultural differences, feeling misunderstood, learning the language, or attending school.

Cultural Difference - All of the participants in this study identified impressions about Canada that indicated differences between their countries of origin and their new home. These included the following: their experiences with how neighbourhoods looked, attending school, interacting with people including other students, the change in their financial situation from their home country to Canada, and how people do things differently, or how the youth identified as being different, or ordering food.

2 Letters excitedly shared that he noticed the differences between Canada and the country he previously lived in. He noted, "I just thought it looks just like the movies, bigger houses, bigger food and drinks. Fast food was crazy; double the size that we had back in England. Girls were more beautiful; of course, they take care of themselves here and much more clean, much more clean." Ann recognised that the differences that seemed interesting upon arrival later caused difficulties for her and said, "Yeah like language and different cultures. Here there's so much diversity. It's also something that when I first notice that it was quite interesting

but later on it turned into like some challenges actually cuz you need to get along with all different kinds of people.”

For Bob, ordering a simple burger was a significant cultural difference, saying, “I just I don’t know what is the right way to, you know to order a cheeseburger. So yes that’s my first experience in Canada that I can remember.” As such, cultural differences caused moments of awkwardness, difficulty, and challenges to settling into Canadian life.

Miscommunication/Misunderstanding – Three of the respondents possessed difficulties expressing themselves and communicating their needs. Sometimes that miscommunication led to problems with understanding others, being understood, and at times to further conflict. Being in a situation where misunderstanding occurred meant that the youth found settling into Canadian life was often difficult and frustrating. It was difficult for the youth because they knew what they wanted to say, but they were unable to feel confident about getting their message to others:

Miscommunication can lead to conflict, just something as simple as a word that’s being said wrong, in the wrong context, could actually lead up to a fight or something like conflict. Yeah.[...] I can’t remember from the top of my head, but there’s been times when people would misunderstand what I’m saying because of my accent sometimes maybe I spoke to fast back then and I had to slow it down to the Canadian speed. (2 Letters)

I’m still experiencing that. Um, cuz when we came here I knew basically nothing about Canada, like I used to think that Vancouver is the capital city of Canada. It’s like two years ago before, before I came here and I got to know it’s Ottawa not Vancouver. When people like Canadians when they talk, and a lot of times I just lost the words. Like I don’t know what they were talking about, and you know the jokes they make and like also the topics they had. Especially younger generation, I found it’s even more difficult to understand what they are saying. I found it difficult before and I still find it difficult sometimes. (Ann)

Educational/School Differences – Three of the respondents identified difficulty adjusting to attending school in Canada. They spoke about how the education system was different in Canada from their home countries, which impacted their acceptance of school routines,

furthering their education, and participating in Canadian culture. All of the youth possessed expectations about being successful in Canada. As a result of the differences in the education system and the challenges that emerged, Ellen dropped out of high school because of the difficulty she had adjusting, “Um, um, Canada’s culture especially in school how they, how they did things. Ah, the routine, the everyday routine.”

Anne faced multiple rejections from university master programs because of the differences between the education in her home country and the education in Canada:

In some way there, there is less competition but as an immigrant sometimes it’s very hard to get into the field that you really want to work for. And, after coming here I realized that my university degree that I got from my country is basically not recognized by companies or agencies here. I’m not doing what I learned in university at all. It’s completely not related. And in terms of study, I applied for how many, 7 schools and I, I didn’t get admitted by any of them.

Lei learned new information, which caused him to challenge his beliefs, and to consider the truth about what he learned previously. The differences in educational styles between his home country and Canada also contributed to a breakdown in the relationship between Lei and his traditional parents. As he stated:

I mean that was a shock of its own. The other thing is, in the, in the area that I came from, they didn’t teach about sex or, or the biology of human nature. So when I learned that about in Grade 7, I felt like I was lied to my entire life. Because it was such a hushed down subject that no one spoke about it. We didn’t know, I mean I came still thinking that I don’t know, we came with storks or something.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Heavy Emotions

The sub-theme about heavy emotions refers to the feelings reported by the youth in the interviews. Feeling anxious, depressed, or angry emerged as the major types of heavy emotions from four of the respondents in the data analysis. These emotions led to fatigue, changes in behaviour and self-care, and impacted the respondents’ relationships. The impact of these heavy emotions was that it was tough to function, get along with others, or release feelings.

Anxiety and Depression – Two youth worried about what others thought about them and how they would appear to others, and they worried a lot about making friends or how people would perceive them. 2 Letters explained by saying, “Anxiety, like, just thinking, you know, will they accept me because I’m different. These kids or these people have grown up in this city together for the longest time and usually new kids are not accepted right away.”

Ellen also explained the impact of anxiety on her perception of how others viewed her by stating the following:

Anxious, um, when you’re anxious you’re kind of paranoid too it connects. Right. When you’re anxious, you don’t want to walk the, I didn’t want to walk the hallways in school when there was like a whole bunch of crowd. Just, just around you like right there you know. Cuz, and you feel conscious about if, if, you ever, if I ever stumble down or fall, I mean would I look, would I look funny to them or would they make fun of me, you know, things like that.

The youth also worried about what the future would bring. Coming to Canada, the youth held expectations that they would be happy, but they felt even more anxious because of noticeable differences of being “new.”

2 Letters, Ellen and Anne shared that they felt depressed, which contributed to extremes in behaviour such as a rush of unexpected emotion, crying, not eating, and the inability to take care of self. 2 Letters stated, “I just remember, sometimes it would go so bad, like while I’m working my shifts, I would just break down, like just thinking about it, like just want to go home. You don’t want to do anything, right. Just don’t want to talk to people.”

Depression caused Ellen to stop eating. She said, “Well, like I didn’t want to eat, I just, emotionally affected, I felt depressed and lonely but like, like I was eager to hang out but I just, I kept myself kinda away from doing that.” Ellen went on to explain, “I didn’t feel good in a way that I didn’t kind of take care of myself. I would, of course I starved myself cuz I wouldn’t want to eat. So it affected my eating habits. I still exercised. But over fatigued.” Feeling depressed is

not the same as having medically diagnosed depression, and none of the youth received medical attention; however, all of the youth who felt depressed revealed that they could not control their fatigue, stress, temper, or appetite.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Isolation/Not Belonging

All six of the respondents commented on the isolation that they experienced residing in Canadian society. Isolation emerged in the following ways: lack of friendship, questioning their self-worth, which accentuated how different they were as newcomers to Canada. As a result, the youth often felt hurt and withdrew even more. 2 Letters recollected that he felt so isolated, he wanted to return to England. He stated:

There were times when I really wanted to go back to England because I just didn't think that things were working out here. This is a month, a few months into Calgary. Back then I was just reminiscing that I had all the friends, all the close friends, close knit buddies and I just had a life there. It was very solid, and then you come in here, it's very turbulent. I have to start earning my stripes and to prove myself and try to fit in.

Ann discovered that having an introverted personality on top of being a newcomer to Canada influenced her ability to develop new relationships. She remarked:

Well I have to say that, that's a disadvantage of coming to Canada is, it's so hard to leave friends. Well given the personality that I have, like I'm pretty introverted and like at that time I felt, I mean like, like as I mentioned previously when I was not at home, like outside of the home and then I felt better. I felt like I have achieved something. But it's more like through a working relationship or, it didn't go anywhere. It's not like in depth relationship and I had no friends at that time. So that made things more difficult sometimes.

Lei's use of the word 'shunned' shows the strong impact of isolation/not belonging with his peers. As someone who already felt different because of his disabilities, Lei did not expect that he would be rejected because he was an immigrant. He voiced the following:

And in other ways, it was also the fact that I came here and I was, I guess I was thought of as strange or weird because, you know, coming here as an immigrant it's hard you know, with all this cultural shock to really talk to people. So you're sort of sitting there a little bit shy and of course you know how kids are, they take things differently and the

other thing was is that kids are a bit cruel sometimes too. So in many aspects, I was somewhat shunned.

Lei and Bob recognised that their physical differences, Lei because of physical disabilities, and Bob because of race and skin colour, led to not belonging, which further increased their isolation:

Well, it hurt, it hurt bad. I couldn't really, couldn't say anything because it's almost like well it's not like I can really show you. You know, I can't really, I can't really swap eyes with you, I can't really swap positions with you, so I mean what am I really supposed to do. So again, it was almost, it led more and more like I said to the fact that I had, I spent those days in my room just doing work. It was again, the loneliness and isolation concept that I had to deal with. (Lei)

Color, race, the way I speak, the way I think, the way I dress, the way I look like. It's weird for them. And I get that, I mean, I'm a new guy and it's not their fault that they you know they see me that way. It's just because they're not common to, not used to seeing you know a new guy from other place that dress differently than them. I could be wearing shorts in the winter and people would look at me weird and say, "What's wrong, why are you wearing shorts?" You know things like that. (Bob)

Being isolated and feeling that they did not belong were hard for the youth to work through. They felt out of place and as a consequence they dealt with loneliness. Withdrawing made it difficult to connect with a range of people including members of their families.

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Risky Behaviour

The categories within risky behaviour ranged from alcohol and drug use, which were also tied to extreme partying, to criminal involvement, including gang membership and peripheral associations. Three of the youth identified risky behaviours as a result of being marginalised youth. They tried a range of drugs, made poor decisions, became known to the police, and stressed that these were problems in their lives.

Substance Use – Three of the youth used substances to help themselves overcome their problems. 2 Letters and Joe drank and at times used drugs. They revealed their substance use in the following quotes:

Yeah, you know there's been times I had to go the extra mile so I could. Being a strong, Christian kid, back in the day, going to church every Sunday, parents who would really push their beliefs on me, but then I would try a lot of drinking just so I could fit in the parties, so I could socialise more. Kind of helped, but I thought it was stupid at the time. (laughs) I did a little bit of drugs, nothing too hard core, though. It was more like, what do you call it, social kind of thing. (2 Letters)

Um, literally it was like if went to a party I was gonna get plastered. So it wasn't, I didn't see it as a problem. Like I don't think it was a problem, other than the binge drinking. Like I call it that now because I'm, I've become more aware about terminology and stuff. But back then it was just no different than other people were doing. Do you know what I mean, like we went out and then got drunk and whatever. Then a couple times there were drugs involved in that when I was an adult. Do you know what I mean but I was so drunk I don't even remember. So technically I've done drugs but I don't actually know what it was like because I don't remember doing it. (Joe)

Ellen was the only youth who noticed that these substances impacted her mental health, which then in turn affected her behaviours with her family:

Um, like trying out a few drugs, a few types of drugs, like marijuana and other hard core drugs. Ah, yeah, I tried crystal meth too and drinking and I smoked. Of course, that's the effect the drugs do to your body right. Mentally that's the side effect.

Drinking and partying became frequent activities for the youth. Often, they drank so much that they behaved in inappropriate ways, including at school by laughing at teachers, smoking, playing hooky, breaking into cars, and neighbours calling the police about their parties.

Poor Decision-making – Three of the respondents shared how they made bad decisions, which resulted in behaviour that physically and emotionally harmed them and caused damaged relationships with their family or peers. Ellen recognised that her family knew about her poor decision-making when she said, “They, like start to discipline me, they yell, they scream, just to remind me what I'm doing is something that wouldn't be too good for my future.”

Joe also participated in activities that were potentially self-harming, such as climbing into the trunk of an overloaded car. He stated:

But we were still coasting on the reputation we had built from before of being the party guys and do you know what I mean, because it was literally like, “Oh party at their house yay!” Everybody and everybody came and you know what I mean we had friends from all over the city. Because of going to parties and always travelling in groups. So like 15 cars showing up, and when I literally say 15 cars I’m actually not even exaggerating. Or cars where there’s like 10 people in the car and, like we did stuff that was really dumb. Like the car was so full that there was people in the trunk. You know what I mean, and you’re going to a party. You know, like and, yeah, like it, honestly it was like we’re very fortunate to be alive.

Another respondent, Lei, developed harmful relationships with his peers:

I know I made a, a couple of friends, quite literally, when I was in about in Grade 7, but even then they were very, they were very negative friends in respect that they’d have fun simply, hitting me sometimes. And you know, even, I had a moustache at an early age. So I mean that would be poked fun at by peers, by my friends, like I felt truly alone.

Criminal Behaviour – This behaviour included gang activity or peripheral involvement with crime. Ellen revealed that although she was not part of a gang, her group of friends were known to the police, and she engaged in criminal behaviour because of her friends. Ellen said:

Somehow yeah, cause see when you hang out with the wrong people and of course they’re influencing drugs these people that I used to hang out with, and they would look for trouble when drugs take over their heads. Just looking, walking the streets and looking for people to beat up. Those things um, stealing um.

Joe named a Hispanic gang that grew most out of one of the SE high schools and was well known to police:

Lots of fights. But I, it was only by association, do you know what I mean so like through my siblings I was connected to [name of gang] and all that stuff. Do you know what I mean? Um, so yeah, so it was a total, [...] yeah, well they’re probably more evolved now, this was way back in the day. You know what I mean when they were starting out just a bunch of kids just calling themselves that. That’s who we were, but the kids now, I think it’s an actually group. Do you know what I mean, but back then the name was just adopted. Like people, it sort of just came up. Do you know what I mean with a group of Hispanic kids started calling themselves that.

The youth who were involved in criminal activities continued in these activities for some time. Even though there was police involvement, disappointment from their families, and one life and death situation, the youth did not withdraw from criminal behaviour until after their time participating in forum theatre.

5.3.1.5 Sub-theme 5: Low Self-esteem

Low self-esteem impacted the youth's sense of self-worth and their capacity to forgive themselves and they also allowed their peers to influence them. As a result of having low self-esteem, some of the participants disregarded their needs, the concept of right or wrong, and their families. Overall, the participants' interactions with their peers and experiences being newcomers to Canada shaped the respondents sense of self, and thus their self-esteem.

Peer Pressure – As a result of low self-esteem, the youth maintained that it was easy for them to follow along with the rest of their peer group, even if that following along led to inappropriate actions. As Ellen voiced, “Yeah, it was more of influential than rather than coming from just, just me, deciding to do that. It was first influential. [...] Yeah too much socializing with the wrong people.” As a result of peer pressure, Joe started shoplifting, and described himself and his group as being sheep. He noted “we were just being sheep, like literally we literally just following the group. The group was doing certain things so like everybody was doing it, you know what I mean?” Because of the influence of his peers, he went on to state:

Well I wanted to be a smoker, cuz all my friends were. So you know either I was sheep, or I don't know what it was you know what I mean. But I gave it my best shot. I literally went with them, cuz a lot of them smoked so I went with them to the doors, and you know, I, I, was getting smokes from people, and trying to get into it and did it after school, did it in the weekend you know what I mean?

The respondents understood that low self-esteem led them to become involved with people who influenced them in inappropriate ways. They were willing to take risks because of their friends and they justified those actions because everyone else engaged in similar behaviour.

5.3.1.6 Sub-theme 6: Financial Need

Immigration placed financial burdens on the study's respondents and their families. Joe and Ann started working to contribute to the family's economic stability, which was unstable due to single parenting or because their parents were unemployable. The youth shared how dependent their families became on them; hence they needed to work. Joe began working at 14, and Ann began working upon entry into the country:

It was a single mom situation so that's the reason we were all working. Um, so, so yeah basically that was our life though. So we would go to school during the day and every, 5 nights a week we would go to work. Then if we wanted extra money then we had to work on the weekends. Which I was the one that didn't really care, so I didn't get that extra job. (Laughs) So the money that we made all went to the house though. Like it didn't go towards ourselves. So we didn't work for ourselves at all. (Joe)

As I came with my parents and I was an adult already and then both of them were learning English. So I was the only one who was working. The only one who could speak English so it's just like they, my parents, it's not they don't, they don't want to do anything or they don't want to take any responsibility, it's just they can't. So everything was left to me. At that time I felt like I as the youngest one in the family was the one who kept the family running. (Ann)

5.3.1.7 Sub-theme 7: Family Strife

Stresses that occurred as a consequence of migrating to Canada caused tensions in the family dynamics. Often, relationships were filled with arguments, resentment, unwillingness to make situations work, and challenges in maintaining family unity. Four of the youth focused on the difficulties and stresses in their family. Joe reported he wanted his father to come to Canada to support the family, and due to broken promises, he and his siblings did not have the support that they needed. He revealed how this estrangement happened:

Yes, everyone came under that assumption. So we were never in the plan that we were gonna be working nonstop, like it turned out to be. Do you know what I mean? The fact was like he was gonna come and he was gonna take over, but that never happened. So that's how we ended up in that situation. Don't get me wrong, as I idealize the life now in some ways, it was tough going to work. It sucked do you know what I mean? Like working cleaning, like it wasn't fun and ah, but we knew that, but I guess part of it was that we knew that, like we literally spent 9 years waiting for my father. So everything we were doing felt like "Oh just another 6 months only." Because he literally, he would tell us that he would be here in 6 months and then that date would come and then it would turn into another 6 months.

Oh our relationship broke down. We basically only made up with him a year before he died. So we had, so a lot of resentment and a lot of anger and do you know what I mean, based on the fact that the family broke down.

Bob's parents wanted different things upon arriving in Canada. He shared that his mother wanted them to be financially stable and his dad wanted to have fun. As a result, the estrangement between his parents affected his relationship with them and with his siblings. He believed that he could not rely on his family and that everyone became indifferent to each other:

Well for me, at least what I saw, is you know there's struggle within the family. Everybody just wants to do what they want for themselves, not for the whole family. For example my mom wanted to find a job and my dad wants to go on vacations and just do whatever, have fun. But we're not here for that; we're here to start a new life so the whole balance of priorities are not intact at that time. So it's a bit of a struggle because everybody wants to do everything at the same time. So there's a lot of separation of ah, focus in whatever they want to do here.

Upon arriving in Canada, a generation gap occurred for three reasons. One reason came about as the result of the youth speaking English better or more fluently than their parents. The second reason was that the youth were able to better acclimate and understand the culture. The final reason was because the youth experienced disagreements with their parents; thus there was intergenerational conflict between the youth and their parents.

Ann became the interpreter and primary earner in the family because she spoke English while her parents did not. Because of perceived differences between her generation and her

parents, Ann experienced a breakdown in the relationship with her father. She did not understand how he could not adapt to life in Canada while she adapted well:

I think it's because, cuz, I never had so many responsibilities before I came to Canada. I was pretty much still a kid who was spoiled by my parents. After coming here, it just, so many responsibilities fell on my shoulders. It was so sudden, like it happened really just like overnight. Once you're here ok, boom. Here you go and you need to do this, do that for your parents for yourself for the family. You need to answer all the phone calls, do all the letters and when they are going shopping I need to go with them so that I can translate. You can read the tags and tell them the price and check out, just everything. Yeah I was like a parent in some way to take care of my mom and dad.

Because of the developing generation gap, Lei's beliefs diverged from his parents.

Culturally, they held on to the belief that they were responsible for his well-being. Lei looked at their traditional responsibility towards him as not accepting his points of view, and he wanted to have greater independence from them:

You know, I always, I mean even in Toronto like my parents wouldn't let me do things like certain, like not just go to parties but like, they, they still had that protective concept over me and they still do, and so it makes it feels sometimes like I'm a kid. I feel sometimes that my values, my ideas and my age, isn't quite seen through their eyes. I understand that they're parents however I am of a mature age.

Family strife occurred in Joe's family, not due to intentional neglect, but because his mother was always working and because his father elected to remain in their home country. Joe remarked: "Oh we never saw each other. Well we saw, I saw my siblings at school right? But my mom we hardly ever saw because she was working so much."

Bob disclosed that his father hit him and his siblings, and Bob further commented on how he handled this situation:

Well, at that time I didn't understand why does he have to drink, why does he have to hit people? Why can't he just say whatever he wanted to say? You know, not make a big scene about everything. [...] I felt scared, I felt weak, I felt like, like I felt like, ah, sort of just questioned actually, why do I have to go through this bla, bla, but scared and weak for sure.

Oh no, I just, I just took it upon myself just to stay out of his way. I have my own challenges. I have my own goals. I just do my own thing. So the less for me, the less contact with him the less that would happen. [...]The less beating that would happen, the less contact.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Protective Factors

The respondents discussed the individuals or situations that enabled them to look forward to better lives, new opportunities, or feel a sense of caring. Several protective factors emerged in two sub-themes and three categories, such as commitment to academics, family ties, and work. Each of the protective factors are addressed below:

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 8: Social Supports

The theme of social supports included the following sub-themes: importance of school as a place to be, and the sense that families were important relationships to the youth, and that work provided a source of support.

School – School and school work highlighted to three of the youth that they possessed more opportunities and that they were strong academically. As a result, their confidence increased and they felt the need to work harder. 2 Letters discovered about school that:

It was cool. Much different from England, ‘cause back then we have uniforms it was real strict, your shoes should have laces, if your shirt was untucked you’d lose your lunch an hour of lunch. It would suck! But here, it was more free. It felt like it. You could, I don’t know how to word it, but I think it was better here, much better.

Lei realised that school was good for him because through his commitment to school work, he excelled. The result was that his parents were proud of him, his disability was not an issue, and he had confidence in his academic abilities. Lei talked about school as a place to escape from issues. He expressed, “despite having those issues, I then, see because from where I come from marks and that kind of stuff were very important so I had a very strong commitment towards my educational path.”

Ellen did end up dropping out of school after she began hanging out with people who influenced her to steal, do drugs, and break into cars. However, before socialising with that group, she felt a sense of achievement from excelling at school, stating that she got “A Wisagra award. It’s a, it’s spelled as it’s said, it’s WISAGRA. It’s a, I got it in Grade 9 right. It’s like one of the best students so I got distinction it means I had, the highest marks in the school” and because she had a good attitude.

Family – Family was a great source of social support as identified by three participants. Ellen recognised that parental concern prevented her from escalating into at-risk behaviours as quickly as she would have because her mom, in particular, kept checking in on her. Speaking about her parents, Ellen shared with me that:

Because they’d talk to me about it, when I really, on the table eating and they’d bring that up. Their concern, they were concerned as parents. Parents are concerned about you, alright. So they were asking, especially my mom. Moms they, they have this connection with their children, more than the father I think, that’s true right. So, so, that time, she was always knocking and making sure I was ok in my room you know.

Joe recognised that upon entry into school, he did not become isolated because of his relationship with his siblings. Joe’s recollection about receiving support from his brothers follows:

So having 3 siblings be a part of it really defined what my immigrant experience was like. Cuz I actually never spent a minute without any friends. So in high school having siblings that were identical twins just made an ice breaker that was, it made it easy to make friends and our friends multiplied by 3 cuz if I met one person and they met one person suddenly we had 3 more new friends. We’d hang out together so, so, I’d find that my experience was unique when I’d run into other people based on that alone.

Bob shared that he felt estrangement/indifference from his family, which resulted in fewer social supports. However, he found that life became easier with restored family ties and he let me know how important family had become to him when he stated that “But as the months or

years went by, I would, you know, start doing things just to keep everything you know, together.”

Work – Joe repeatedly identified having a strong sense of commitment to work because it enabled him to develop skills and a sense of responsibility that ended up driving his success in adulthood. Joe believes in a strong work ethic even now, about which he stated:

But we really developed a good work ethic because even looking back on it for all those years that we worked, and we were working cleaning. That’s what we were doing um, so because we mostly worked, some, sometimes a contract situation, and now when I find people that take time off from cleaning jobs, I can’t understand it. Because in our world view that wasn’t an option because if you didn’t go to work you didn’t get paid. Cuz that was the reality of it. So we never missed work. Do you know what I mean? So it really developed a good work ethic for myself that I find myself now that I have office jobs I kinda have the same attitude. You know like because if you don’t go to work you don’t get paid so why would you take time off?

Bob was surprised that he was employable in Canada, and it provided him opportunities that he had not had previously in his home country:

I was actually surprised I found one very easily. With what, I know I don’t have a very good background on, on, working. That was my first job so I had zero background working here in Canada so I was surprised I was hired very fast actually. But it’s not like ah, office job that you have to be have a background and so, it’s more of a physical job. Basically it’s what I got offer so that’s, I didn’t mind that job so.

5.4 Impacts of Forum Theatre

5.4.1 Theme 1: Benefits

The respondents shared their experiences and thoughts about participating in forum theatre. My interviews with the participants took place at least 1 year and a maximum of 13 years after the respondents last experienced forum theatre. On average, 4.8 years had passed between their last experience with forum theatre and the interviews. The results captured the positive impacts that they shared. Through the data analysis, I was able to identify thirteen sub-themes, and four categories. The results are presented below:

5.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Relates to Real Life

All of the youth participating in forum theatre created their plays based on real life experiences, meaning they did not find a pre-scripted play to rehearse. They explored their stories of isolation, substance use, peer-pressure, and other risk factors, and developed scenes that represented their realities. That the forum theatre related to real life was very important because the youth were immersed in relevant, relatable, tangible experiences. They were not totally play-acting. In fact, because the forum theatre related to real life, the youth were able to explore their real life struggles and oppressions by being characters of their own narratives within shared group stories, and by witnessing potential and different outcomes to those stories.

2 Letters talked about coming up with the stories:

If I can think back. There were exercises they wanted us to think heavy thoughts, like, you now, times when you got hurt or like. 'Cause we came up with these stories ourselves and these came from nowhere. They were actually situations that came from our past or inspired by something. We all agreed to a part and I'm sure, like, no part was by accident, right. They must've come from somewhere.

Ellen stated that her scene in the forum theatre event closely mirrored real life. She shared that being new to Canada caused her to perceive that other students identified her as different, which kept her apart from her peers. About Ellen's forum theatre scene she commented:

Well my character was like I said the new kid in school. This other, this other character she was a student and she's been in the school for quite a while and she was telling some of her friends, and influencing them not to talk to me or, or hang out with me or accept me as a new student.

Joe revealed that his whole settlement experience became inspiration for forum theatre. He had a wealth of stories and he recognised that his personal stories were about struggle:

And then it was forum theatre. And then it became a look back, and suddenly I had so much material for forum theatre that we ended up using a lot of the stories to create scenes about.

Because there was just so much stuff, because it was either mine or my siblings. I had either been a witness to it or been a main player in many of these stories that were about oppression or power dynamics.

Anne noted that using her own personal experiences was not intentional. She stated:

It wasn't, it wasn't purposely created in the way of mirroring my own life. It, it just, I don't know it's like it happened (laughs) to be in that way. Everybody, cuz my, my team mates are, both of them are immigrants as well. There's just nobody, nobody ever questioned that "Oh this sounds so much like our real life, let's not do it." No we just did it, and I guess when you are not told you are doing it and, and, you just follow like more creativity. If felt good. I think it's like, it's the plot but we almost finished the plot, the script. Then or was it even when I, when I, when we did the first play, then I realized that how much it mirror my own life. But by that, by that time I mean what's done is done, right? And I wasn't feeling really bad or uncomfortable about that.

Bob recognised that he played his dad in the scene he created with his group for forum theatre. He understood the character well because he lived the experience. However, he did not play himself, which helped him to understand his own personal passivity and propensity towards behaving like his father in real life. Bob explained his character's behaviour by stating, "I was about to hit my daughter and my daughter was planning to go away, you know, my wife tried to stop me from letting my daughter walk away now, or go out with this guy or, like." The youth did not intentionally create the plays to showcase their real lives; yet they created very real stories about times when they felt hurt, isolated, abused, or about self-exploration, and they performed these stories to their peers and to people who did not know them. As a result of relating the forum theatre plays to real life, the youth were able to explore real life situations.

5.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Social Supports

Four of the youth recognised that strong, healthy relationships grew out of forum theatre. They reported having great experiences with supportive peers and facilitators who helped them develop skills and confidence, and as a result they felt better about their situations and themselves. The outcomes of these connections were developing social supports through forum

theatre, which emerged as a key theme or benefit. 2 Letters affirmed, “I was with positive people and we were also on the same road. We were trying to settle in Canada and become better people.”

At the same time, Ellen recognised that she developed social supports given her remark that:

It impacted it in a good way because I lost that anxiety that I felt when I first came. Because you get exposed to a lot of people and it’s, you’re more exposed in a supportive group of people. Rather than people that are putting you down. So it actually helped.

Joe explicitly stated that forum theatre was beneficial by helping him to develop healthy peer relationships. He spoke about the benefit:

Another benefit obviously is the friends. I met some wonderful people that were honestly different to all the people I had met before. They didn’t have those backgrounds. They hadn’t been in fights in high school, or they hadn’t been associated with people that were in “gang-ish” situations. Yeah, it was nice, like I made some really good friends that were different.

5.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Developing Confidence

The youth not only performed in front of a crowd, but they also used creative exercises that helped them build the plays into successful forum theatre events. As a result, four of the youth recognised that forum theatre was instrumental in helping them to build their confidence.

In the following quote, 2 Letters shared about being able to speak to large groups because of forum theatre:

For kids who are shy, who don’t do much public speaking, ‘cause public speaking actually benefits people a lot. You’re going to be public speaking no matter what in life, in a group of four or 200. So they’ll need that skill. Just to be surrounded by people and having fun. It would be like a haven, safe haven. You know. The whole trust thing. I remember we did that whole trust walk. That was cool. I always saw it on TV, never thought I’d do it in real life.

Ellen highlighted that forum theatre helped her to build confidence numerous times. She stated:

To become more patient and confident. By doing forum theatre you start to develop confidence. Of course you face, you face quite a bunch of people and you also develop more patience within yourself. Not everything you can get overnight. You know.

Anne also shared that she developed confidence when she said:

But just for myself like it in some way build up my confidence. It's like "Ok, I can, I can, I did it, I can do something" and so I, I carry that to my other aspects in my life. But sometimes those things, oh, I even did a theatre play then for sure I can do this task.

And for Bob, he related that forum theatre was a "stepping stone" for him with regards to building confidence:

Cuz after the forum theatre or even while we were practicing for the forum theatre I got confident on talking. I, I just you know, was, I was able to get my point across and whatever I'm trying to say I, you know, I executed well and just say what I want to say, and you know, feel what I feel about things. So definitely good communication, like the confidence was brought into a higher level than whatever I had even before the theatre.

Developing more confidence helped the youth to become aware, because they completed a forum theatre event, that they could achieve other things in their lives. The sense of future achievement occurred because they not only received positive feedback from others, but also accomplished something they had not previously done.

5.4.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Positive Experience

Forum theatre was a positive experience for the youth who encountered many negative experiences in their short time since arriving in Canada. The process of developing forum theatre and the comfortable environment forum theatre provided, in which they were safe and supported, defined the positive experience of forum theatre.

The Process – The process of developing forum theatre centered on the youth using their feelings and experiences together as a group to create stories about struggle and oppression. Facilitators guided the youth by utilising theatre activities to help the youth play, have fun, and develop techniques to perform. The process was also dependent on the youths' dedication to

rehearsing and following through with the forum theatre event for both individual and peer success. The words of the following participants captured these sentiments:

Oh, everything, from rehearsing, to getting into groups, doing all those exercises. I really looked forward to it every morning. I wondered what those two Edmonton actors are going to teach us this morning. Those were really great teachers, yeah. I forgot their names, my bad. They were really cool. They really know how to spice up the morning and set the tone for the rest of the day, and each day, like with the exercises, you just felt more ready. Ready for the, what do you call it, ready for the actual day of the performance, and we of course did baby steps. At the beginning, you know, we never thought that, like, we're not going to go on that stage, but they actually prepared us, walked us hand-in-hand and walked us towards it. But the day of, we were just ready to just do it. Yeah, thanks to them, man. That's what I remember now, the rehearsals and the groups, getting closer with teammates, for sure. (2 Letters)

Um, well first it, it really just gives you the chance to, to speak out and also the way that the theatre was done in my group, cuz the facilitator really guided us gradually. So that it didn't look like a super, super, super challenging or difficult or how professional it should be. Like the facilitators were just guided us, we didn't even realize that we have done that much by the end of the play. (Ann)

In forum theatre you gain a lot and you learn a lot. You don't really lose anything. It's more of a gaining process you know you would learn more about yourself. You would learn more about people around you. You would learn more about life. You would learn about understanding why people do what they do. (Bob)

The youth gained skills, figure out their emotions, built relationships, and thought that they found themselves through the process of forum theatre.

Safe and Supportive – Four of the youth stressed that forum theatre provided an environment where it was fun and safe to share their feelings and they felt supported in a non-judgemental way. Forum theatre provided an opportunity for the youth to talk about struggles and create change. 2 Letters identified forum theatre as a “safe haven” and Joe mentioned that forum theatre was a safe space. He conveyed his thoughts in the following:

Do you know what I mean, so yeah this life as a crazy at-risk youth, as the books would tell you, do you know what I mean, and then getting into forum, I was very fortunate though that it was a very supported environment and that kind of thing.

Furthermore, both Anne and Lei stated that feeling safe affected them positively in the following excerpts:

One thing that I really liked about it, like what I realized from doing the theatre is even in a short period of time given the right situation and circumstance, strange people can get close, work together and do something really awesome. Also if everybody is feeling safe, like the theatre is a very good example. Like we feel, we felt safe to, to say what we feel. So if people are feeling safe and then it is possible for people to open up and to share their feelings and emotions, and that actually in some ways just impacted my personal life. (Ann)

Well, I felt that it was almost, forum theatre felt therapeutic in respect that this classroom is a place where we leave our bags outside, and we come in without judging each other, and we accept each other for who we are. So it was almost like it was a place where you could come and respectfully be accepted. (Lei)

5.4.1.5 Sub-theme 5: Reflecting

Reflecting was an important sub-theme of the benefits of forum theatre because all six of the youth found themselves exploring and thinking about themselves, their situations, their beliefs, their sense of self, and their understanding of others. Two dominant categories that surfaced were gaining insight and self-actualisation/personal growth. All of the respondents developed a sense that they knew more about themselves and/or wanted to be different or better because of their participation in forum theatre.

Gaining Insight: Six of the youth recognised that they used the forum theatre space to re-examine themselves, through which they gained a better understanding of their beliefs about themselves and others. Forum theatre provided an opportunity for the youth to see that they had self-harming behaviours or chose friends who were negative influences. Forum theatre was also beneficial because the youth gained insight about how they could be different and choose differently in the future. 2 Letters used the words “dig deep” in regards to reflecting. He stated:

Oh, ‘cause people don’t really have the time, the space to dig really deep. Maybe there could be a flash of memory, but they actually gave us a quiet space and just think to yourself. It’s kind of like a meditation, and that’s what really helped digging deep. ‘Cause you can’t really dig deep on a normal level.

Ellen developed insights because she fully related to the character she played. She discovered:

It kinda made me realize to just stay away from them, cuz it wasn't doing me any good anyways since I seen that reflection and, and I also had an insight. Um, aside from that shadow reflection that I see myself on stage while doing this, an insight of that I'm capable of doing more things than just wasting my time doing crappy things, like getting into drugs and taking that influence and destroying my life.

Joe asserted that forum theatre provided him with the opportunity to reflect. He revealed that by deconstructing his stories and his beliefs through forum theatre, he understood more about his family, his choices, and gained insight about what was important to him. He stated:

Well because it encouraged me to look back and to, to re-examine the power dynamics of all the craziness. Like when I literally can name off movies of, like, crazy high school lives, and I can tell you I did that, when you get to forum with that it becomes pretty heavy. Do you know what I mean? So when you ask me about hardships and all this stuff I literally did not see those things as hardships, because I was so wrapped up in it. It didn't happen till I got to ah, to forum that in the look back aspect of it, it became a lot more apparent of what a messy life it had been. Do you know what I mean? Like, not messy but you know how many things that have happened that were, and then made me aware that how people in my family were racist. It made me aware of how my culture was racist, and I literally was changed by that. Because I didn't know any of that stuff existed. But, because in forum we would sit around in the group and then say "Ok, everybody we're gonna talk, who wants to share a story."

Ann enjoyed the reflective process. She believed that she gained insight into her family life and mentioned the following:

I, I, got to reflect some aspects. Actually I think it helped, in some way it helped my real life situation with my parents. Because like in the play there was also a mom and then through that character I realized that – why my mom was like that or what she was actually going through. It's difficult but it's totally in a different way from how, like what I was going through. So it helped me see my parent's perspective actually.

Lei gained insight about his personal capacity. He recognised that despite his disabilities, he had accomplished several things. He stated that:

Well, some of the advantages of search for identity in this process was, it helped me understand who I was a little bit more clearer. Through the search, I've discovered that reflectively I have done all these things, and I have gone through this; however, I have

picked up the guitar, I have developed an interest in drama, and then I started to teach myself a new language, and it's looking back, I look back at the idea that I've actually accomplished something so why should I belittle my abilities.

Forum theatre allowed Bob to delve into understanding his father's choices. He also made some self-discoveries with the recognition of how he was following his father's abusive nature and how he wanted to be different. Bob divulged:

It made me a, not really made me a better person, but made me realize that it is really, really bad. I mean there's no reason why it has to happen. There's a lot of ways to express ourselves differently than um, being a physical, a physical dad that hits people. It just made me realize that you know, it is a really, you know there's no reason for that.

Self-Actualisation/Personal Growth – Self-reflection that resulted because of their participation in forum theatre also brought about an achievement of all six of the respondents' personal potential. They recognised that they could be better than their peers and family members, and recognized how they were in the past because they now had positive thoughts and behaviours. The youth developed skills and attitudes that helped them create and meet personal goals, maintain peace in their families, and stand up for themselves and others.

From his experience in forum theatre, 2 Letters found out that he could be a leader and made a decision to be one. He declared:

And I'm aware if you're a great leader, you've got to have all that stuff down, so that's what led me to the whole speaking to hundred, more than a hundred people, at the G, was it the AGM, and I spoke, like, to fifty people for meetings sometimes. And I have that image in my mind, like I've already done it before. Like I know how it feels, so why should I. Just keep going, keep doing it.

Ellen, who was peripherally involved with gang activity, decided that she could go far in life. She spoke about pursuing criminal justice and stated that forum theatre "pushed" her in this direction. She recognised her own potential and went for it, stating:

That's actually one of the main attitudes that could get you far in life, right? I never thought I would be finished school soon, like looking at things right now in my life. I'll

be done school, I just need a year. One year and then that's it. So I thought I couldn't do a 4 year course I was just gonna go to a diploma or a certificate kind of course but I gave it a little time and just I always told myself just be patient enough till I actually get my degree.

Joe adamantly stated that without forum theatre, he would be living a completely different life. He stated that:

Cuz we knew all about that, cuz I think a lot of the things we did was peer pressure, and I didn't realize that until do you know what I mean, I got to be 18 and being in the forum that I was able to look back. Like I literally, I literally would not be who I am today if it had not been forum theatre.

For Bob, realising his potential went beyond understanding his parents' struggles, and he was able to forgive the physical abuse that happened in his family. By stepping into his father's shoes during forum theatre, Bob realised that he did not want to be an abuser, and he made a decision to treat others better and to not resort to violence:

Yeah it did, actually. For example, with girls. Um, before I was like "Ok, we're going out" just going out, but no talking no, you know, whatever feels right just go for it. Well now I just, you know, I'm more, I'm more concerned of what my girlfriend is feeling than what I feel. You know what I mean, it's just, you know I always, it's I ask constant questions "Are you ok, do you need anything? Is there something I am doing wrong, is it" you know, the sense of you know if she's frustrated or something I just want to talk about it. I know if she says "Just let it go" bla, bla, I won't stop until it is resolved so. I'm more understanding with other people the more I'm calm, the more that I'm at ease.

5.4.1.6 Sub-theme 6: Processing Heavy Emotions

For four of the youth, forum theatre provided a place where they could expose their strong emotions to help them create characters, and they were able to develop an understanding of those heavy emotions, such as hurt, anger, and anxiety, and how those emotions impacted real life. As a result, the youth processed these emotions because they recognised they felt heavy emotions and that these feelings negatively impacted their real lives.

2 Letters related how he dealt with strong emotions when he said, "To me, I had to actually embody a different character but still channel that anger and that frustration to my character, and it

really helped the act.” He explained further, “Like just think of that emotion or that thing that’s giving you anxiety, that negativity that’s going on, focus on that and then switch it around and see how you could vent it out with your character.”

Ellen understood that anger was “storming” that happened when she experienced a difficult situation and that she used her emotions to understand her character, stating, “Yeah it made me perform better on stage showing people that watch the forum theatre that it can actually, cuz I was able to execute emotions better while thinking of that hatred.” Processing heavy emotions helped Ellen to process the hatred that she bore for her parents and recall that she really valued their concern and affection.

Anne learned that she did have some heavy emotions, which she did not realise were impacting her. She stated:

I think before I did that theatre I didn’t know I was that angry (laughing) with my own family. I didn’t realize that – like before I did the theatre – that’s another difference between my culture and the Canadian culture or just western culture. People here tend to express themselves more and they know how to do it. Before I didn’t know how to do it. See in my mind I never realized that I was, I felt I was neglected. We don’t even have such a matching word in Chinese. We just don’t say it or we don’t accept it or we were trained to avoid something like that. Just I didn’t even know, but through doing the theatre and then I learned about that feeling. Like being neglected.

Ann also realised that she had been angry, was capable of anger, and so was able to work through her anger through the forum theatre.

For Bob, he was able to process his anger towards his father, and to an extent himself. He told me:

Like I said it was like a relief for me because I got my- some of my emotions, some of my emotions out and just let it out and forget about it. Not hold it against my dad or not hold it against my life basically.

Processing his anger helped Bob to move forward in his relationships.

5.4.1.7 Sub-theme 7: Communication

Miscommunication/misunderstanding was one of the sub-themes under risk factors that affected the youth. By participating in forum theatre, four of the youth shared how they developed their communication skills and learned how to share deep issues with others in effective and meaningful ways. 2 Letters remarked:

Here the problem with communication is the main character, one of the key messages of our play, or our act, our group, was what may mean one thing to you may mean another thing to another person. So the main message was be careful how you word things. It could offend someone.

Here Ann talked about developing communication skills:

It improved the situation. Cuz you know, like I learned how to communicate with people and how to tell them what I feel. So I think that's the first step of a good communication. Right. You gotta make people understand you. You cannot just stand there saying nothing and, meanwhile, expecting people to understand you from inside out. That's not possible. So I learn to, to, to say something first. If I feel something and then just tell people. That really helped.

Furthermore, the capacity to communicate helped Bob to work on his relationship with his father. He stated:

Just in real life, I just basically started talking to him, started putting, you know, start asking him, "How do you feel about this day." I mean just starting to communicate. Starting to build that relationship as a father and son. You know just more to, actually just understand him more and worry about his problems. I mean he has his own problems, and sometimes it's hard for him to share. Sometimes it's hard for him to you know, say something. Just like putting yourself out there and telling him that you're here to listen and you will understand, it kinda gives him the whole good vibe. Just the whole experience like that.

5.4.1.8 Sub-theme 8: Life Skills

Life skills enabled the participants to tackle the challenges of being at-risk youth. They developed some life skills during forum theatre that allowed them to embrace daily situations.

This sub-theme emerged for all of the respondents. The youth shared that they were better able to

cope with stress, develop attitudes that moved them towards meeting their goals, and gained skills that helped them to better express themselves:

Ah, I think it made me more articulate because in witnessing people articulate their thoughts in a very controlled environment, you know, I think that was teaching me as well how, you know how in forum you get to try it again, and it's a safe environment where you can turn back time. Eventually, because you see the same intervention many times, you might get to the really good one. Suddenly I think my own skills were enhanced by witnessing that, by being part of these ongoing shows. (Joe)

Yes, and like through, through that program, our facilitators have been always encouraging us to do something that, that you normally don't do. Like to carry yourself out of that boundary that you set up for yourself. To go beyond, and I think I saw this if the other group withdrew, then I believed at that moment I saw this as an opportunity to practice what the facilitators have been encouraging us to do. (Ann)

Well, I try and use my experiences of forum theatre to basically address situations that arise with, you know, try to step back objectively and looking at the situation and saying, 'well this is what's going on, now what could happen respectively to flip things around or change the predicament.' (Lei)

5.4.1.9 Sub-theme 9: Accountability/Responsibility

Four of the respondents recognised that they developed a sense of responsibility during their time doing forum theatre. They realised they needed to complete forum theatre for themselves, and they understood that their group members needed them to complete forum theatre; otherwise, the forum could not go ahead. The youth transferred their new accountability/responsibility they learned in forum theatre to other parts of their lives. 2 Letters demonstrated this when he said:

We have the goal to work towards it, we have to work together, we have to make this play good. If one team member was missing the whole structure would, like, what we going to do without this. The show must go on right. Sense of duty.

Ellen not only felt accountable to her forum theatre group, but she also felt responsible towards her parents. She voiced this in the following:

I would say you know how forum theatre there's a lot of themes right? And like there's not being wanted and there's early pregnancy. I guess our theme in the family would be

not pressure from my parents but a black sheep in the family and how you're putting your parents, putting your parents through a lot of pain. So I shouldn't be doing that. It made me see how I am that time and how I should be in the long run to avoid confusion towards my parents. To make life better at home.

Joe also felt accountable for the way he had treated people when he was a gang member, and he recognised that he needed to take responsibility for his actions towards them. He decided that he needed to respond differently in difficult situations:

Um, just like talking about you know, bullying people or that kind of thing. Which I never would have done before, you know? Like or because you know in the scenes that's what you do, right? You try to solve it, and you try to solve it in ways that don't escalate the situation, that don't lead to a fight, right?

Four of the youth recognised that taking accountability meant sticking with something, contributing to a healthy family life, standing up for personal beliefs, and making good choices.

5.4.1.10 Sub-theme 10: Overcoming Isolation/Acceptance

Isolation/not belonging was a theme that resonated with all six respondents; however, for three of the respondents, forum theatre was an effective mechanism in helping them overcome isolation and feel a sense of belonging. These youth felt accepted because of other characters in the plays accepting their character, through audience intervention, or by developing camaraderie with other youth who acted in the play. Bob shared that he “had fun. I had my friends I had my, you know, co-actors I would say.”

Another youth, Ellen, felt accepted in real life because her character, which was based on her personal experiences, felt accepted. She relayed this by saying:

Oh, this, this one character in the theme or in the play, it doesn't really relate somehow but it kinda helped my character to go to school every day and, and feel wanted rather than unwanted. Like this one character who was sent by this other mean character to stay away from me but, she, she didn't listen to them. She still made friends with me so. It helped me.

Ellen also emphasised that when she said, “It helped me,” she was referring to herself and not only the character she portrayed. Moreover, Lei commented upon the audience intervention

multiple-times as providing a community, particularly when the spect-actors tried various solutions. He described this when he said:

Here's an issue, we're opening that up to you, let's see, let's solve it as a community, and it's that whole coming together as one. It's interesting because as a person, when somebody comes and says those things, you get to hear how they feel, and hopefully they've had some experience and it resonates with them. So again, it's almost like an idea of coming together as a community, so a person might feel as if they belong.

5.4.1.11 Sub-theme 11: Hope

The sub-theme of hope became defined as a result of three youth re-framing their situations based on their experiences in forum theatre or because they observed audience members who intervened in the play and presented unique solutions. Firstly, Ellen developed faith that she would have better opportunities and recollected:

That part I kind of remember when they said, cuz they, cuz they usually they, they said they were stop right if they wanted to replace a character, right. Oh yeah, this one, this one audience he said stop that part where this one character was influencing this other good character not to hang out with me. He played that character and told her instead to the, like, told her to just, I don't know, just say hi and make friends with me instead of avoiding me.

Secondly, Lei recognised that problems had solutions and hoped for a sense of peace. He spoke about his hope:

So the whole community coming together concept will hopefully bring ideas for this youth to either deal, like give permanent answers to their solutions or find ways of looking at it objectively and try to switch the table so hopefully it will just bring a bit more peace and zen to their daily lives.

Lastly, Bob developed hope that if he reached out he would be able to reconnect with his family. He shared:

I started talking to them, what's up, started catching up, what's going on with their lives and you know, just telling them I'm here, if you need anything. What do you want to do and you know, I started putting myself out there to, you know just to talk, to start talking again and everything.

5.4.1.12 Sub-theme 12: Performing

All six of the respondents shared that performing on stage and in front of a crowd was in some way fun and expressed that they became comfortable pushing themselves to perform. As a sub-theme, performing was about the youth stretching themselves and creating an event in which they felt inspired and in which they inspired others. 2 Letters mentioned that performing was the “fun part,” and went on to say that performance gave him the ability to do new, difficult things:

Like putting myself in situations that’s not in my comfort zone like right now. How often do you get to speak in a one on one with a recording conversation, like speaking to hundreds of people in the room like working with youth so just doing that overtime you become more comfortable about it and you’re not so shy anymore.

Through performing, Ann found out that she had talents that she was not aware of before doing forum theatre. She enjoyed the experience, but in particular the style of performance in forum theatre. She stated:

Actually it’s, it’s where the, I got to see my own talents that I never thought I had. It really, it’s um, it’s a form of performing art that really inspired people. Sometimes you felt, I mean I felt I was pushed out of my own comfort zone. And then, but that I did it anyways. So after that it’s a feeling of achievement. So that was quite enjoyable. And it was also fun to work with other participants to see how people have different ways, different body languages to express themselves. And it’s a very, I think it’s a very interacting form of art because the audience can get involved.

Other youth shared that they enjoyed performing because of the uniqueness of audience intervention that takes place in forum theatre. In regards to performance, Lei mentioned:

So after touching on these, these themes, we used pen names to re-create situations that we had to go through and after staging it for an audience, the nice thing about forum theatre was we basically turned the tables, instead of solving it for them, we said this is the situation, how would you best solve this? And people sometimes come up with some very interesting ideas.

The audience intervention part of the performance gave the youth the ability to recognise that other people understood the themes in the plays, which were based on real life situations, and

that these situations were not unique to immigrant and refugee youth. Seeing audience interventions also showcased that there were viable solutions, which impacted the youths' real lives. In the following quotations, Ellen and Lei discussed the value of the audience intervention:

Well because especially when the audience starts to intervene and steps up and they will take over the place of whoever character they're gonna take over. And to see how they would react to all our different themes in the forum theatre. It's, it's amazing how people are gonna fix the world to make it a better place. Just like when one of the audience stopped this protagonist in our theme, replaced it with that audience herself and did the right thing to just, to just tell this student to go and say hi and acceptance rather than judging. Yeah. (Ellen)

And people sometimes come up with some very interesting ideas. We had this one scene in the forum play where this one girl was sort of gossiping with another about how I'm sure that person has to be gay and what not. Then the audience member took the place of that persona and she said, "So what does that matter? What's it to you? Sorry, I don't see the relevance." And this basically hushed her up in her place because then the issue switched from "Oh, I'm minding my business until the phase well this person's gay, etc., etc., to so what, everyone is different." (Lei)

5.4.1.13 Sub-theme 13: Benefit to Others

All six respondents thought that forum theatre would be beneficial to others. They would encourage other at-risk youth to participate in forum theatre because the experience enabled the respondents to go outside of their comfort zones in an inviting way that allowed them to see themselves in a positive light. This sub-theme tied forum theatre to benefitting others because all of the respondents believed that other youth would explore feelings, challenge themselves, have fun, and learn more about themselves in their experience of being new to Canada. 2 Letters expressed his thoughts about the benefits of forum theatre to newcomers to Canada when he stated the following:

The reason is to try get out of their shell, something new, and to just try that experience of being a different character, but using your own influences and like your own experiences to drive that character and it could be an interesting, you could come up with an interesting story, and who knows it could make you a better person.

Bob also stated that forum theatre would be good for newcomers. He expressed that forum theatre would be a good way for new immigrants to understand and delve into their emotions. He went on to say:

I guess I just said it before, it was, it's a good experience for newcomers, for sure. And not really just for newcomers, just you know for youth – that having struggles, strife, um, having troubles letting out their emotions that are not whatever, what they really feel, it's a good way of finding yourself. It's a good way of getting to know, getting touch to who you are really.

Joe believed that forum theatre would benefit at-risk youth and he reflected that if he had gotten involved in forum theatre earlier, he may have made different choices. He shared that he would tell other youth:

I would say you know what, this sort of, this is. I think with them I would emphasize that this can be really fun, you know. And you can take it as far as you want and how much you get out of it really comes out of how much you put into it. Um, you know, we're gonna invite you to maybe share stories, and you can share as much as you want. Um, and um, and through that process you might learn something, you might not, and it's really up to you. But if you have any questions at all, you know, like I, the people there would be there to answer those questions or facilitate that.

For Ann, the benefits were far reaching because they were for both the immigrant/refugee youth participating in forum theatre and for the non-immigrant observer. As such, she stated:

You can tell them it's also a chance for you to learn about yourself, and, and, possibly then you will benefit from the theatre then you can better handle the situation you're going through. One thing I like about it is it just – it makes other people aware what immigrants are going through. Especially for those non-immigrants who have been here for a long time or have never left the country before. I think it's, it's quite eye opening to them I suppose.

5.4.2 Theme 2: Disadvantages

I asked the respondents to tell me about the negative impacts or disadvantages of participating in forum theatre, because they were espousing on the positive impacts of forum theatre. The respondents stated very little about the disadvantages. Through the data analysis, I identified three sub-themes and the results are presented below:

5.4.2.1 Sub-theme 14: Reflecting

I identified reflecting as a sub-theme under disadvantage for two of the youth because they shared that reflecting caused them to bring up negative thoughts, feelings, and situations. 2 Letters explicitly stated that, “Digging deep wasn’t the fun part” and that it made him “go back to a darker place.”

For Joe, he felt that through reflecting, he discovered things about himself and his family that he did not like, and as a result he made changes in himself and in his life:

You know and so I guess I didn’t get to intervene in the show but I got to intervene at home and with my friends and stuff. But that would be a disadvantage though. Um, and I think in some ways I probably just dealt with it by just associating more with the people that were becoming more similar to me. You know, and whether or not that was part of my own resilience, you know, like the fact that I chose to say, ‘Ok, since I’m changing I either need to change them, like don’t associate with them or need to become like them. Right, and I think the choice I made is that I was gonna now move in with these people that were thinking about social justice and starting to socialize slightly more.’

I probed to find out how reflecting was a disadvantage and he shared that he made changes that were difficult and challenging as a result of reflecting because he was becoming different from his friends and family:

Well the fact that you have to change, and you have to give up stuff right? That can be a disadvantage. I don’t regret it at all, but it, it can be tough right? Because you’re changing and other people are changing, but they may not be changing the way you are changing.

5.4.2.2 Sub-theme 15: Anxiety

For two of the youth, participating in forum theatre heightened their anxiety. They did not focus on this stage-induced anxiety for too long when they participated in forum theatre.

However, they felt that they experienced a situation that put them out of their comfort zones, and they surprised themselves because they coped. 2 Letters said multiple times that participating in forum theatre led to anxiety. He particularly remembered:

It's just that anxiety, social anxiety, the whole stage thing. Really to think on my feet and that was something I wasn't good at back then, and I think I would have handled it better now. Right, but I was also a little bit intimidated.

Ann surprised herself with her capacity to perform. She remembered that she only recognised feeling anxious after she had finished the performance. She recalled:

It's after, after the theatre right, like after a while, I remember when I look back, I was shockingly surprised that I did it. That there was ones like this when I, when I look back I think, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I did it." For a moment I felt a little bit awkward, like I felt as if I exposed myself too much to those strangers but I only felt that once. I, I, now I don't remember whether they are, there were some like circumstances going on at that moment when I look back, but that, that's, it like I carry myself so far away from what I am feeling comfortable.

5.4.2.3 Sub-theme 16: Incomplete Process

Two of the youth identified that they were not completely satisfied with forum theatre as a medium to help them share their stories and feelings as much as they desired. Ann used the word "incomplete" to describe the sense that there was something missing from the process since forum theatre did not wholly allow her to achieve her desires. Ann thought that a movie would be a stronger medium:

Um, I, I just felt that sometimes like it could be more, I don't know I feel like there should be some, some other way as a more powerful and complete to convey your feeling or your message. You know like for example like a movie.

In addition, Lei thought that despite good audience interventions, forum theatre was not a medium that permitted him to safely share his message with his family. He believed there was something missing in the forum theatre process because he could not personally apply proposed solutions:

The disadvantage that I found was that despite it being great to have the audience intervention, it wasn't, some answers, like talking back to mom and dad aren't necessarily applicable to every case. For some student, he could easily say, "well, I don't give a crap about what you say because I live my life, etc." but in my case, where if one shouts, you can't shout back, it's more you have to sit and take it, so not everything could be applied, even though you'd like to.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The youth used their experiences of being newcomers to Canada, their struggles and difficulties with settlement and in relationships both at home and outside of their homes, and their feelings to inform the themes in their forum theatre events. Consequently, they explored their real life situations in safety, with a supportive group, and were able to gain insight and develop skills and attitudes that facilitated their ability to resolve difficult situations, embrace challenges, or focus positively on themselves and their personal needs.

The respondents remembered their experiences in forum theatre fondly for the most part, and believed that their participation in forum theatre provided them with opportunities and connections that positively impacted their lives. While three of the participants found that there were small disadvantages to participating in forum theatre, the entire group believed that forum theatre would benefit others and would recommend participation in forum theatre to other at-risk youth, newcomers, or any youth at all. I will provide further interpretation of the themes in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impacts of forum theatre by exploring youths' personal insights into their experiences in forum theatre and to explore if practitioners could use forum theatre as therapy with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. In this final chapter, I situate my results within the relevant literature and discuss the themes through a summary of insightful interpretations of the findings. I also discuss the implications of forum theatre as an intervention with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth for social work practice and education. I also outline the limitations of the study, and I conclude by offering a few suggestions for future research.

6.1 Significance of Findings

Eight risk-factors emerged spontaneously when the respondents shared their stories. The youths' different experiences with settlement, financial difficulties, and lack of social supports created stress for the youth. As a marginalised population, the youth not only self-identified as having been at-risk, but they also experienced situations that adversely affected their lives at home, at school, their sense of self-worth, and their ability to make sound decisions (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). My research findings confirm that the stress immigrant and refugee youth experience exist and have long reaching effects on their family life, engagement in substance use, their confidence, and in their involvement in unhealthy behaviours, including criminal activities or gang involvement (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005).

2 Letters, Bob and Ann thought that their differences were very noticeable; whereas Lei, Ellen, and Joe admitted they felt like outsiders. As such, the respondents in my study shared that they felt anxious, depressed, and angry because of the differences between their home country

and Canada, because of a new school system, and because of difficulties engaging with their peers (Ellis et al., 2011; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Weine, 2008). The youth chose to withdraw and isolate themselves, which in turn caused more anxiety, conflict with their families, and difficulties establishing peer relationships (Brinegar, 2010; Cho & Haslam, 2009; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Ellen, in particular, stated that she deliberately withdrew from peer and family interactions, which may have resulted in increased isolation and depression, and Ellen felt that there was less parental support than she needed.

According to Berry et al.'s (2006) framework, the youth acculturated differently based on their willingness to participate in Canadian culture and how well they retained their cultural identity. Ellen and Joe chose to develop friendships with people from the same cultural backgrounds, and those friends were affiliated with gangs or were involved in criminal activities. Even though Ann and Lei arrived in Canada when they were older than the other respondents, they appeared to value commitment to education and assimilation, connecting with others outside of their culture of origin, and their accents seemed more recognisably "Canadian" than the other respondents, which may have resulted from assimilation.

Based on Berry's (1997) model, all youth experienced group-acculturation. According to Berry (2001) there are two levels of group acculturation. During intercultural situations, groups can either disregard each other or unite with each other. In particular, 2 Letters and Bob identified differences between their culture of origin and their host cultures, such as food, and felt overlooked because of those differences. All youth felt impacted by differences in language or Canadian colloquialisms, and they had difficulty balancing their cultural traditions and beliefs with Canadian attitudes. The respondents spoke about managing their home life or retaining their

culture of origin because of their parents' expectations and finding a place to belong, which aligns with Berry's definition of psychological adaptation.

Berry et al.'s (2006) research found that youth who participated in healthy activities, engaged in schoolwork, and had strong parental involvement, adapted better to their new country. Bob shared that as he developed stronger family ties and repaired damaged family relationships, he felt better about himself and his future. Ellen stated that when she was doing well in school and because she knew her parents loved her, she did not become involved with criminal behaviour as quickly as she could have (Ellen, personal communication, 2011). Joe felt estranged from his father and did not have much support from his mother, which seemed to give him permission to use substances and follow the crowd; that is, to join a gang (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005).

Within Bouhris et al.'s (1997) theoretical framework, a country's immigration and integration policies have a large role in shaping acculturation. Those policies include policies at school, employment, youth services, and other organisations supporting immigrant and refugee youth. As youth, the respondents in this study all were impacted by their time at school. For most of the respondents, learning a new language and culture and interacting with other people occurred at school, which affected their acculturation levels (Titzmann & Guligni, 2015). For two of the respondents, their work life shaped their sense of belonging as well as their understanding of themselves, which ultimately shaped their decisions.

The relational outcomes were different for each of the youth prior to participating in forum theatre. It seemed that for 2 Letters, Ellen, and Joe, some level of conflictual relational outcomes emerged because they favoured separation from their host culture as a result of recognising differences between themselves and their host communities. These youth developed

strong ties to groups from their ethnic communities, but those ties sometimes superseded familial obligations and led to semi-periphery, periphery, or gang-involved criminal behaviours, risky substance use, and issues with self-care and self-identity. These youth experienced the most intergroup conflict in situations with host community members (Bouhris et al., 1997).

Bob and Ann both sought the integration orientation, which was the most consensual relational outcome amongst all of the respondents. Because Bob and Ann were older and young adults upon immigrating to Canada, they interacted differently with people they met from the youth who entered school upon arriving in Canada. These youth also seemed determined to be major supports for their family; for example, Ann supporting her parents financially, as an interpreter, and in connecting with support systems and settlement services. Lei seemed to choose assimilation, which was a problematic relational outcome because, on the one hand he felt marginalised by both the host culture and by the host community, and he decided that he would be different from his parents and adopt an acculturation orientation towards his concept of Canadian society. Throughout the interview, Lei often spoke about how he had different beliefs from his parents and his culture of origin.

Nevertheless, during forum theatre, all the youth explored their differences within themselves and from society by “re-presenting” their oppression for witnesses to challenge and solve. By recognising their resiliency and their capacity to overcome struggle, the youth discovered that a key part of belonging or integrating successfully was by sharing their stories. They discovered they could belong with their families and have peers from different ethnic and cultural groups. Performing forum theatre to their larger communities allowed the respondents to share positive or consensual relational outcomes between immigrants and host community members. In this way, the youth developed stronger relationships with their families, made better

choices for their health and well-being, and developed confidence in their capacity (Fawzi et al., 2009; Linesch et al., 2014).

The impact of forum theatre on at-risk and immigrant refugee youth has not been comprehensively studied. In fact, through a review of the literature, I found that this gap, that is using forum theatre as an intervention with this population group, existed. The body of knowledge about at-risk immigrant and refugee youth is extensive (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Este & Ngo, 2011; Fong, 2007; Hilario et al., 2014; Matthews & Mahoney, 2005; Ngo, 2008; Tensky, 1993; Van Oudenhoven & Ward, 2012; Weine, 2004). The literature also identified that group processes, including therapy, that help immigrant and refugee youth to make positive social connections, develop skills, and share their stories empower youth to overcome their struggles (Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Weine, 2008). Forum theatre is a group process that enables group members to voice their struggles (Malchy, Johnson, & McBride, 2011). The respondents made healthy connections with their peers, as shared by 2 Letters and Bob, and they were able to share their personal narratives, which helped them to improve their confidence (Linesch et al., 2014), which demonstrated the efficacy of the group process.

Participating in forum theatre had mostly positive impacts on the youth, and fourteen benefits of forum theatre emerged from the data. Augusto Boal (1995) spoke about the importance of forum theatre being real. According to Brechtian philosophy, in which the character is both subject and object (Boal, 1979), it is important for the actor to experience a dichotomy of being self and other, of rehearsing and playing scenes that are both real and imagined. Ultimately, this realness led to the ability of participants, both actors in the play and the audience members, to intervene with solution after solution.

Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1975) or forum theatre, aligns well with anti-oppressive practice in social work because the creation of forum theatre raises self-awareness and provides opportunities for forum theatre actors and spectators to challenge oppression. The spectator challenges oppression by actively witnessing (Freire, 1993). Referring to the play she was in, Ellen shared that when an audience member said stop and replaced another character in the play, he told the characters to be friends with her. The spect-actors addressed the oppression in the play, that of bullying and exclusion, by creating inclusion. Creating a dialogue with the characters in the play, the spectator confronted the bullies, and sought to instigate change (Diamond, 2007; Houston, et al., 2001). By showing his understanding, the spect-actor who stopped and intervened in Ellen's story created a potential solution to break the oppression.

The positive impacts on the youth were derived, in part, because they used themes from their real lives to create the plays. The results of my study re-iterate Boal's (1979) belief that reality re-imagined allows for many possible interpretations of meanings as well as presentation of solutions, and creates a discourse about struggle and oppression. Furthermore, alternate realities emerged (Houston et al., 2001), which aligned with protective factors of social supports and hope (Weine, 2008). I found it particularly interesting that as the youth immersed themselves in forum theatre, they were able to grasp that they could have those alternate realities for themselves.

Since social work's primary goal with anti-oppressive practice is to understand how structural oppression impacts human relationships (Bishop, 2002; Payne, 1993), anti-oppressive practice allies well with forum theatre's use of Freire's (1993) approach of re-presenting reality. 2 Letters mentioned that one of the characteristics of forum theatre he enjoyed was that the stories "were actually situations that came from our past." All of the respondents spoke about

how they re-presented their real life stories within the group context of struggle and oppression as they built forum theatre, and that their forum theatre events closely mirrored their real lives.

By situating their reality in the forum theatre, the respondents co-constructed challenges with their audiences, who were from their communities, and gained insight into overcoming oppression. By 're-presenting reality' the youth challenged their existing perspectives about their struggles, and moved from dialoging about their problems to actively transforming themselves (Sullivan et al., 2008). Moreover, the youth discovered that even as they co-created the realities in a performance for an audience, they had the capacity to change bad habits, resolve family conflicts, and pursue happiness for themselves (Mills, 2009; Burton, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings of this study contribute to the idea that safe and culturally sensitive social work interventions help at-risk immigrant and refugee youth to feel accepted and understood, leading to the ability to cope with stressors (Weine et al., 2004). Culturally sensitive means social workers understand and utilise the youths' language, values and traditions (Isakson et al., 2015). For the youth in this study, forum theatre addressed the pressures they faced because they were immigrant and refugee youth. Through forum theatre, they were also able to share their narratives about their personal and group struggles. By having faith in the forum theatre process, the youth willingly disclosed difficult situations and discovered that they were not alone. They received positive feedback and gained abilities to explore both intra-personal self and interpersonal relationships with their peers and family members (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009).

While participating in forum theatre, the youth developed self-esteem, overcame dark emotions, and they gained a deeper understanding about themselves. The participants also made decisions that moved them towards having positive relationships with self and others and having

hope in their futures. The narratives the youth developed allowed them to construct and deconstruct oppressions and created a space where they could process alternatives (Boal, 1995). The youth benefitted from participating in forum theatre and many of them shared that it was either a “healing” or “therapeutic” process. As such, social workers could utilise forum theatre as an intervention, which supports Boal’s (1995) assertion that through the exploration of personal and political or structural oppression, the actor experiences therapeutic or beneficial effects.

A number of researchers used forum theatre to help themselves and their groups to break apart and interpret, or deconstruct, oppression. Researchers made connections between harmful behaviours and thought processes, and were able to explore relationship dynamics. The outcomes included a sense of empowerment for the youth, a sense of community, and the capacity to take responsibility or the knowledge that the participant can contribute solutions (Bhukhanwala, 2014; Conrad, 2006; Leichner & Wieler, 2015; Mills, 2009; Mitchell & Freitag, 2011; Pleasant et al., 2015; Proctor et al., 2008).

The participants confirmed that at the core of their experiences with forum theatre, they gained many benefits that positively impacted their concept of self, their ability to think about their problems, and an increased capacity in repairing relationships or moving away from unhealthy relationships (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009; Weine, 2008). Through the investigation of challenges that impacted their lives and their choices as re-interpreted throughout forum theatre, the youth were able to re-connect positively with themselves and others.

Several researchers have used forum theatre as a means of creating a dialogic process to examine meaning and create action (Mitchell & Freytag, 2011; Proctor et al. 2008; Sullivan et al. 2008). According to Freire (1993), the dialogic process is dependent on the constant communication process that is integral to all relationships. Through this process of dialogue,

people are constantly creating themselves, challenging perceptions of self and other, and transforming or re-creating who they are in relation to their cultural context.

All six of the youth shared that, throughout forum theatre, they were constantly processing their knowledge or understanding of the theme that they used to form the play. As a result, by reflecting on deep issues such as feeling isolated, drinking, or heavy feelings such as depression or anger, they were able to acquire an intuitive and rich understanding of their context, as well as to understand themselves, their situation, their emotions, and dynamics within their relationships (Linesch et al., 2014). Reflection is also inherent in social work's anti-oppressive practice for the social worker and for the individual or community with whom the social worker engages (Danso, 2009).

Utilising a reflective process also fits in with Freire's (2011) dialogic process of analysing and deconstructing our knowledge of an object or subject because the youth were jointly re-creating their realities and linking their insight of self and personal experiences to others' in the group. This reflective process helped the youth to transform or change because they recognised that their personal truth shifted. The youths' personal truth, prior to participating in forum theatre, was in identifying with their struggles, which impacted their choices, emotions, and behaviours. After or during their participation in forum theatre, the youths' personal truth was that they were capable of performing, were confident, and were committed to having positive futures because they went through a process in which they shared and explored their struggles of acculturation (Linesch et al., 2014). They re-defined their idea of self from what they were before. Such self-discernment provided the youth with impetus to be leaders not followers, to create and work towards positive goals, stand up for themselves and others, be patient with others like themselves, and look for better solutions to existing problems (Cho & Haslam, 2010).

6.2 Implications for Practice & Education

While I cannot conclusively state that social workers or clinicians could use forum theatre as therapy with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth, social workers could use forum theatre as group or therapeutic art intervention. Social workers using anti-oppressive practice as one of their guiding principles could use forum theatre to investigate structural oppression. One implication for the use of forum theatre is as a means of creating dialogic discourse that could prompt personal and social change, which is inherent to social work's anti-oppressive practice. Just as Gutiérrez (2013) used forum theatre with his students to create peer interaction, critical thought, and self-understanding, the youth in my study discovered that they were similarly engaged. Just as the participants of Jana Sanskriti discovered they could change their personal situations and their communities, the youth in my study discovered that they could instigate and motivate change.

Participating in forum theatre created opportunities to reflect on their situations and their struggles as well as to contextualise the stories of the group or community. Reflection is a key principle of anti-oppressive practice in social work (Danso, 2007; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Schutzman, 1990). While all of the youth in my study reflected upon struggles with which they dealt, or they developed some skills in managing those struggles, the forum theatre events they participated in were not intended to be therapy, and the youth did not participate with the intention of resolving conflict within themselves or within their families. However, through reflection, the youth were able to confront their beliefs and assumptions about themselves and about their larger community (Proctor et al., 2008) within the context of their settlement experiences (Linesch et al., 2014). As self-reflection is integral in social work practice, forum theatre would be a good mechanism for social workers and their clients to develop critical

reflection skills. Change could happen for actors through a reflective process about the 'I' as both actor and character because the oppressions and struggles are real and because the actor both feels the emotions and plays the emotions. Change could also happen for the observer or witness who also becomes the 'I' that the actor is both being and playing because the witness replaces the actor on stage and becomes the character (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1993).

This reflective process is important as a means for intervention with an individual. The findings in my research show that as individuals, the respondents arrived at personal change because they developed a deep understanding of themselves, their desires, their emotions, or their relationships, in part because they felt understood and accepted (Fong, 2007) by the facilitators, their peers, and the audience members. Social workers using forum theatre as a tool for social change would be able to support youth like Ann and Lei, because through forum theatre, the youth discovered how problems developed because they were newcomers to Canada and how their experiences of acculturation affected their place in the family as well as their concept of cultural belonging (Cho & Haslam, 2010). Since social workers sometimes utilise art as a means to support clients with exorcising their strong feelings and providing opportunities to investigate hardship and suffering (Sinding, Warren, and Paton, 2014), forum theatre could provide social workers with another instrument with which to enquire about structural and personal oppression.

Another implication of this research is that there are potential uses of forum theatre as a method or technique for a social worker to use in a group intervention as expressive art therapy for two reasons: 1) using expressive art therapy often inspires social change (Estrella, 2011; Levine, 2011); 2) as the results show, forum theatre provided the immigrant and refugee youth opportunities to voice their personal experiences in a shared creative narrative. Such a shared

narrative allowed the youth to express the difficulties that they still had to resolve (Weine et al., 2004). The respondents encountered forum theatre as an experience that helped them to develop life skills to tackle or rather, embrace challenges, and understand that they had control over their own lives (Linesch et al., 2014). The respondents also framed forum theatre as a natural process for sharing, getting out, using, or transforming their heavy or difficult emotions such as anxiety and anger (Sinding et al., 2014).

Art therapy is a means for speaking about the real world with the intent that the art-maker is the expert of their experiences, and the art-leader provides a change in perspective and a space where it is safe to fall apart in order to transform or heal (Chambon, 2009; Estrella, 2011; Knill, 2011). The first stages in the creation of forum theatre are also about creating a safe space for the participants to be uncomfortable, and for them to explore crisis that has no solution. The youth created the images or the plays from their own stories; they were the expert, and it is only in the forum theatre event that the participants began to explore resolutions (Diamond, 2007). Therefore, they were constantly adapting, being taken apart, and experiencing chaos. By exploring those moments of crisis and chaos, they reached a new consciousness.

Just as in art therapy the therapist believes that the “breaking apart of self” (McNiff, 2011, p. 86) is essential for personal transformation and community building, so too does the transformative group process that takes place in forum theatre rely on “collective disturbance” (Diamond, 2007, p. 172). The respondents revealed that “digging deep” or reflecting on and uncovering their heavy emotions as well as sharing their personal stories was difficult. However, it was in part because of the difficult aspects of forum theatre that they were able to change. By using their heavy emotions to create the characters in stories that reflected their personal

narratives, the youth experienced a release of their negative emotions, and this resulted in them developing self-understanding and self-determination (Blank, 2010).

Therapeutic interventions for youth should also be collaborative processes (Weine, 2008; Weine et al., 2004), and the respondents shared that they were part of a larger group process. They were members of groups creating group stories. While they contributed their own experiences to the crafting of the plays, the youth did so in collaboration with other youth and facilitators. The respondents recalled that they developed a sense of accountability to other group members because they realised others relied on them to successfully reach forum. Furthermore, the respondents felt supported by the actors who facilitated the forum theatre process and by the community members who attended the forum theatre event. As such, Ann noted that forum theatre would be good for engaging immigrants and non-immigrants to fill gaps in their understanding about each other.

It is very important for social workers, and group interventions with at-risk youth, to utilise culturally appropriate assessment tools, policies, and experiences (Ellis et al., 2011; Este & Ngo, 2011). Forum theatre is an invitation for the youth to share their personal narrative using creative techniques that are adaptable, since they were used in various parts of the world (Burton, 2010; Conrad, 2005; Hammond, 2013; Leichner & Wieler, 2015; Mills, 2009; Pleasant et al., 2015; Proctor et al., 2008; Sullivan et al., 2008). As such, I would suggest that since forum theatre was successful with these diverse population groups, such as Aboriginal, East-Indian, and also with the respondents in my own research, forum theatre could be a culturally appropriate intervention.

Furthermore, in order for the interventions to be successful, the respondents engaged in and completed the process. They committed to following through since they held the belief that

they were important and connected with their peers (Forthun & Montgomery, 2009). The respondents' experiences with forum theatre revealed that it was not a passive process; they had to truly participate as actors and co-creators as well as interact with audience members with whom they were not familiar. The deconstruction of their reality and then the creation of a re-imagined reality depended on the youth fully believing that their stories mattered, that their participation was important, and that they contributed fully to the whole forum theatre event. They believed that they were important to their peers and to the process, and so they contributed fully.

Forum theatre shares clinical social work or counselling's processes in creating change and transformation (Proctor et al., 2008). Furthermore, forum theatre and social work operate from the place that culture and political, social, and economic structures affects the person (Boal, 1979; Chambon, 2009). Moreover, social workers believe that they can transform our world when people develop their knowledge, skills, capacity, and utilise their resources (Blank, 2010; Levine, 2011). Social workers could utilise forum theatre with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth as a means of helping the youth to investigate internalised oppression, overcome self-blame, and help them to grow resiliency (Proctor et al., 2008). Since the respondents in my study shared that they developed hope, found a sense of belonging, and developed skills that helped them improve their lives, which gave them a better sense of themselves (Weine, 2008), forum theatre could enable social workers to support immigrant and refugee youth to develop their skills and a healthier self-identity.

Furthermore, according to Moodey (2013) social work aims to support people to identify struggle, triumph over the reasons for their struggles, and to change outcomes. Art is fundamental in helping people reflect by having challenging conversations, and ultimately

inspires change (Sinding et al., 2014). Therefore social workers could use forum theatre as a method to help people identify and portray struggle, engage in dialogue, and overcome oppression (Boal, 1995; Diamond, 2007; Schutzman, 1990).

The academy, or studies in social work, also needs additional tools to support students in developing their skills (Estrella, 2011). Forum theatre would situate students in a creative learning environment exempt from oppressive or hierarchical structures in which they could engage in reflective exercises and create dialogue about self and other. Since social work students need to develop empathy for others (Sinding et al. 2014), forum theatre could allow students to contribute their experiences and knowledge by creating scenes from their lives, and then to break down or re-construct social structures that oppress the clients with whom they will support. Moreover, social workers could use forum theatre wherever there is a power imbalance (Isakson et al., 2015) between the social worker and the client, or between the professor and the student. By utilising forum theatre as a method to discuss concepts of oppression and power-over situations, social workers and educators can provide opportunities for youth, students, and other vulnerable populations to engage in an intervention that aligns with anti-oppressive practice.

Students often learn through texts, writing papers and group work, but engaging in the arts (Wulff, 2010), such as forum theatre, should be commonplace in academia. Through art, students would be able to challenge embedded oppressive practices using solutions they created (Sinding, Warren, and Paton, 2014) through audience intervention and dialogue in forum theatre. I believe that there is a need for more creative practices within the general social work curriculum as well as a need to fill the gap, as there is a lack of opportunities to learn about immigrants and refugees in the education system. While there is a course in diversity and a course on immigrants and refugees at the University of Calgary, the social work curriculum

needs to provide a broader and richer understanding about practicing with immigrants and refugees since, as I noted in the introduction, approximately 30% of Calgary's population are immigrants and refugees ("Diversity in Calgary: Looking Forward to 2020," 2011).

While social work instructors occasionally attempt to integrate art and performance (Sinding et al., 2014), providing a space for forum theatre in the social work curriculum would provide a safe space for social work students and their teachers to explore uncomfortable topics. Forum theatre could enhance the curriculum because, through the process and performance, students would grow their abilities and widen their experiences in addressing relationships and emotional, physical, or psychological issues. Through participation in forum theatre, students would be able to relate to marginalised and vulnerable populations like immigrant and refugee youth, because the basis of forum theatre is the co-creation of reality, developing new consciousness, and re-constructing or transforming society (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1993).

6.3 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of my research is that there were only two refugees and two females out of the six respondents. Although the respondents were from diverse cultural, educational, and socioeconomic status, three respondents came from South-east Asian backgrounds. As a result, the sample primarily offered experiences of at-risk immigrant, male, South-east Asian youth. This is a limitation because once I began recruiting I could not influence the ethnic background nor the immigration status of the youth who responded to my recruitment notice; thus, there was less ethnic variation in the sample.

Another limitation of the study is that the findings are not generalizable to the larger population or beyond the six respondents who contributed their experiences to this study. The reasons the findings are not generalizable are because the sample size was small, and the purpose

of this research was to interpret data in a social context; therefore, it was subjective, and did not measure mathematical expressions or determine percentages (Given, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that it is impossible to generalise within the naturalistic approach. They suggested there is transferability between findings based on the fittingness or “degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). The person making the transferability is responsible for gaining enough information about the contexts so they have “a base of information appropriate to the judgement” (p. 124-125).

The respondents all had some time elapse between their last experiences of forum theatre and the interviews for this research. One youth, Lei, last participated in forum theatre one year prior to the interview, and another respondent, Joe, last participated in forum theatre thirteen years prior to the interview. For the rest of the participants there were approximately four years between their last experience in forum theatre and the interview. Therefore, the fact that this was a study asking the respondents to remember their participation in forum theatre meant that the ability to remember in detail may have limited the study because of challenges in recalling their experiences. One of the youth, 2 Letters, could not remember any part of the audience intervention, although he recalled that it did happen. Nevertheless, Joe did participate in forum theatre for five consecutive years and believed that because reflection was an on-going process throughout his forum theatre experience, he fully remembered his time with forum theatre.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

The findings in my research suggest that forum theatre has positive impacts and extensive benefits for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. It is important that I position the findings within the limitations of the research. A number of questions surfaced as I was conducting this research, which I think could become the foundation for future research.

Firstly, group therapy that helps youth achieve deeper awareness of their lived stories has powerful outcomes in self-esteem and overcoming trauma and isolation (Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Weine et al., 2006). Consequently, one possible focus could be to test the viability of the use of forum theatre as group therapy by utilising it as therapy in social work practice with immigrant and refugee youth. A potential study could utilise pre-tests and post-tests as well as outcome scale measurements with at-risk immigrant and refugee youth in order to rate how useful forum theatre could be as group therapy.

Secondly, a question that emerged for me was around gender considerations. Out of the six participants, two were female and four were male. I wondered if there were risk factors specific to the gender constructions and how forum theatre could be an intervention used to create a discourse about those narratives based on gender. Although gender was not a theme that emerged from the interviews, I did notice that only the two female respondents felt bad or guilty about the way they treated their parents. Given my observation, perhaps using forum theatre to understand both the subjective and objective of gender through a cross-cultural lens would be a good future study.

Thirdly, I questioned how forum theatre acts on the joker. Does the constant interplay between being outside the narrative, facilitating the shifting narrative, instigating the audience interventions and being both witness, active and inactive, bring about personal and structural change? How does the constant re-examining of truth (Freire, 1993) filter through the joker's personal concept of self and other? I think that studying the joker in forum theatre would offer significant contributions about how the joker could shape and co-construct forum theatre and vice versa.

Lastly, in studying the impacts of forum theatre on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth, I recognise that a limitation was the elapsed time between the respondents' last experience participating in forum theatre and the interview itself, and that fifty percent of the study respondents were from one ethnic background. A possible focus of future research could be to locate a similar study within multiple and current forum theatre events in which there were greater variations of ethnic backgrounds. Proctor et al. (2008) utilised participatory action research (PAR) to examine the link between forum theatre and family therapy in clinical practice. Using PAR to investigate if and how social workers could use forum theatre as a therapeutic intervention would allow the researchers and the community to partner in developing their knowledge about forum theatre as a tool to support change.

Furthermore, Perry (2011) investigated the differences between PAR and *Theatre of the Oppressed*. These researchers found that since forum theatre begins by the community inviting the joker to come in and help them collaboratively delve into their struggles and share their stories, there is much similarity between the processes in creating forum theatre and the way PAR promotes inquiry and social change. The Jana Sanskriti Theatre of the Oppressed in India utilised forum theatres participatory process to link social issues in the community with ongoing creation of theatre workshops and to facilitate consciousness-raising and social action (Mills, 2009). However, because participatory action research is a grassroots process that works in partnership with the community, it can be time intensive, requiring a safe space and intensive reflection on the parts of the researchers and the participating group.

Since I did not have sufficient time, funding, and capacity, I utilised semi-structured interviews. As such, I suggest that a direction for future research would be to conduct a participatory action research in which immigrant and refugee youth could openly engage in

dialogue about their struggles. Through PAR, the youth could explore how the community itself shaped their acculturation including barriers and challenges of settlement and living within their community, and utilise forum theatre to create dialogue and create social change. The results would be two-fold. First, researchers would collect the results throughout the forum theatre event providing more direct data on the impacts, and second, the results may contribute more knowledge about the impacts based on ethnic diversity.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this research, I explored the impacts of forum theatre on at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. I used a qualitative approach that validated the respondents' experiences as at-risk immigrant and refugee youth as well as their experiences in forum theatre. Many researchers used forum theatre as a means to examine political oppression, develop awareness of issues, motivate and inspire others, and explore the integrity of people as they examined themselves (Conrad, 2006; Leichner & Wieler, 2015; Mitchell & Freitag, 2011; Saldana, 1999). In the cases of the research respondents, they were able to utilize forum theatre in much the same way. As one research participant stated:

When I say oppressed, I mean people that are dealing with whatever kind of situation, whether it's immigration, domestic violence, rape, all these sort of issues that you hear about in the news that they experience in their own lives. An actual political standpoint going on with the government or whether it's a community in terms of people, or even a group of friends that have to come together to deal with a certain issue. (Lei)

The respondents participating in my research study recognised that forum theatre helped them to deal with their personal situations, and they shared that they experienced the dichotomy of being self and other that led them to be active in questioning themselves, their experiences, and possibilities. The significance of these findings is that forum theatre would be a useful and therapeutic intervention model for creating reflective, dialogical discourse and affecting personal

change, as well as a group intervention that uses a collaborative, culturally appropriate process to help youth dig into deeper understanding of their contextualised realities. In due course, forum theatre helped the youth to create change as Joe noted, “Like I literally, I literally would not be who I am today if it had not been forum theatre.”

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Notice

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH & FORUM THEATRE

Be part of an important social work graduate research study

- Were you an immigrant or refugee to Canada?
- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Have you ever participated in Forum Theatre?
- Were you between 15 & 30 years of age when you participated in Forum Theatre?

If you answered YES to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a graduate research study.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how forum theatre impacts youth and will explore the benefits to immigrant and refugee youth who participate in forum theatre.

Participants will receive a \$50 honorarium at the completion of the interview

The primary questions that will be asked are:

1. What motivated you to become involved in forum theatre?
2. What was the theme of the play?
3. What impact did participating in forum theatre have in your life?

This study is being conducted in Calgary, Alberta and will be approximately 1.5 hours.

Please call 403.714.7824 or e-mail Karina Ramdath at ramdathk@yahoo.ca for more information.

Thank you!

Appendix B: Consent Form

University of Calgary Logo

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Karina Ramdath, MSW (C); Telephone: 403-714-7824, Email: ramdathk@yahoo.ca

Supervisor:

Faculty of Social Work

Title of Project:

The Use of Forum Theatre as Therapy with At-risk Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Sponsor:

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to understand the impact that participating in forum theatre has on the lives of immigrant and refugee youth in Calgary.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview. The researcher will primarily focus on your experiences of the forum theatre process, but the researcher will also ask you to describe your background as an immigrant or refugee youth living in Calgary. The interview will be audio-recorded and will be approximately 1.5 hours.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and could withdraw from the study at any time. However, any information collected prior to your withdrawal may be used in the study and future publications. For your participation in the interview, you will receive fifty dollars (\$50). Your decision to participate in the study, should you decide to withdraw at a later date, will not have any impact on the services you receive from any agencies or organisations.

After the interviews are transcribed, the researcher will contact you by telephone and/or e-mail to enquire whether or not you wish to review the transcripts. Reviewing the transcripts is optional. Should you wish to review the transcripts, it may take approximately two to four hours to review the transcripts. Please return and review the

transcripts within 2 weeks of receiving them. Changes to the data may be made based on your input after you have reviewed the transcript.

Would you like the researcher to contact you about reviewing the transcripts? Yes: ___ No: ___

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to give information about your landed status; i.e. immigrant or refugee, your ethnicity, age, gender, and educational and work backgrounds, so we could gather information about the research participants as a group.

If you decide to take part in this research, you will remain anonymous through the use of a pseudonym.

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

The researcher will be asking you to explore and share your experiences as an immigrant/refugee youth and as a former participant in forum theatre. If you become distressed because of your participation in this study, the researcher will provide you with information to resources and counselling services, such as the Distress Centre or The Calgary Counselling Centre, which you could access at no-cost or on a sliding-fee scale.

You will have the opportunity to contribute to a study that will help in understanding how forum theatre impacts immigrant and refugee youth in Calgary.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The primary use of collected information will be to inform a Master's of Social Work Thesis Project. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. All information will be kept confidential by the researcher. The researcher will use quotes from the interviews to explain or provide examples of themes discovered through analysis. These quotes may be used in presentations or in publication of the results.

It is possible that the researcher may hire a transcriptionist at a later date. If so, the transcriptionist will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to accessing the interviews/data collected from you. The audio-recordings and the transcripts of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the researcher has access to. The audio-recordings and transcribed interviews, and any data collected through the interviews will remain anonymous and will be stored for five years on a secured computer disc, at which time it will be permanently erased.

If you chose to withdraw from the study at any time, your information will be kept and added to the group information. You will not incur any negative consequences if you choose to withdraw. You may keep the fifty dollar (\$50) honorarium even if you choose to withdraw from the study.

The information you provide may assist in helping social workers to improve their practice with immigrant and refugee youth. Final reports and/or summaries will be made available to study participants and may be made available to any agency or organisation that participated in the recruitment process. Final reports and/or summaries will not contain any identifying information and that you will remain anonymous to all agencies and organisations.

Thank you for your participation!

Signatures (written consent)

To sign this form, you must be an adult capable of providing your own signed consent.

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Karina Ramdath
Faculty of Social Work
Telephone: (403) 714-7824, Email: ramdathk@yahoo.ca

Or

Faculty of Social Work

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C: Verbal Explanation

Verbal Explanation to Prospective Participants

Thank you for contacting me to find out more about the study.

The study is intended to explore the impact of forum theatre on immigrant and refugee youth. What this means is that I will interview you for 1.5 to 2.0 hours asking you to describe challenges you may have had as an immigrant or refugee youth in Canada and invite you to share your experience participating in forum theatre.

The interview will be audio-recorded and I will make notes during the interview.

The personal information that you provide to me will be anonymous and confidential. What this means is that I will not share your personal or identifying information with anyone.

The data collected from you will be used in the completion of a Master's Thesis project as well as presentations and reports and in any publication of the results.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Should you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to sign a consent form.

For participating in the interview you will receive fifty dollars.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask me, or you may contact my supervisor.

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

About the respondent:

1. Please tell me about yourself and your background as an immigrant/refugee youth living in Calgary.
2. Please share with me any specific challenges or problems you encountered as you adapted to living in Calgary.
3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experiences or challenges?

The experience and perceptions of forum theatre

1. What did you like about forum theatre?
2. What did you not enjoy about forum theatre?
3. What was the struggle (theme or identified problem) that was used to create the play for the forum theatre event?
4. What was the impact of the audience intervention on you?
5. What were the advantages of exploring the issue of (theme or identified problem) using forum theatre?
6. What was not good about exploring the issue of (theme or identified problem) using forum theatre?
7. How did the issue relate your specific situation?

The impact of forum theatre

8. What did you learn about yourself through forum theatre?
9. Describe how your experiences with forum theatre benefit you?
10. Tell me how your experiences with forum theatre not benefit you?
11. Describe how you think forum theatre would help other youth experiencing (theme or identified problem)?

Appendix F: Journal

JOURNAL EXCERPT

(2 Letters/Participant 1)

Recruitment & Interview (Oct 27, 2011)

I recruited (2 LETTERS) through the mass e-mail, with my recruitment notice attached, sent by Ana B. at the Centre for Newcomers. (2 LETTERS) had attended the Youth Possibilities Program offered there in 2007, during which he also participated in forum theatre.

I interviewed (2 LETTERS) today at the library downtown. (2 LETTERS) seemed enthusiastic to do the interview. During the interview (2 LETTERS) was very positive about his settlement experiences. If I hadn't known him before the interview, I may have thought that he was not an at-risk youth. Did my prior knowledge bias me? Did it impact how I led the interview? I was conscious that I wanted (2 LETTERS) to identify some of the issues I knew he had struggled with. I was aware that I needed to guide the interview so that the questions were answered, but I also wanted there to be truthfulness and honesty. I wanted to have validity through the youth's true story and real perceptions about his life and experiences, both with his settlement experience, supports and barriers, and about his experience with forum theatre. I have to listen to the interview to make sure that I was able to capture enough data as well as valid data.

The first thought that entered my mind after the interview was how his words about Canada did not fit his 'reality' upon arriving in Canada. What I mean by that is that my previous understanding about (2 LETTERS) was that he'd had a lot of struggles; particularly with depression and challenges with his parents' lack of acceptance of him, his friends, the way he dressed, his choice of doing animation. Often he wanted to return to England because he didn't fit in here. (2 LETTERS) was what I'd term on the semi-periphery of gang involvement. He knew and interacted with people who were criminally involved yet during the interview, (2 LETTERS) never mentioned these aspects of settling into Canada.

It was a difficult interview because I felt I almost had to push (2 LETTERS) into speaking about the challenges he faced; particularly about depression and the choices he made about girls and friends. In a way, I think it's because (2 LETTERS) has come so far from the youth he'd been five years ago. He has been accepted by his parents, who support him with his work and animation. Then there's the fact that he's given up spending time with the friends and activities that affected him negatively.

Forum theatre seemed to affect (2 LETTERS) positively. He stated that his confidence has grown tremendously, and he utilises, if not the actual visualisation exercises, the idea of them in his life. He has goals now, when he didn't before, and he makes more positive choices because he's gotten into the habit of doing so.

Because this was my first interview, I wasn't sure how it would turn out. To me, the primary struggle used in (2 LETTERS)'s power play was not just tension in the workplace, but conflict

when someone is misunderstood. I think that we could have focused more on conflict due to miscommunication. (2 LETTERS) said that happened to him, and I could have stretched it a little more in terms of settlement in Canada, family ties, school, and friendships. A theme that (2 LETTERS) repeated was how he is much more confident as a result of the forum theatre, so I could have also focused on the ways he was not confident before forum theatre.

I valued (2 LETTERS)'s contribution to the research. I wanted the interview to be longer, but (2 LETTERS) said that he needed to go to work. This is a concern of mine. I know that many of the youth I interview, if they are still experiencing barriers may be attracted by the honourarium, but may not be able to give an hour and a half. I dislike that I'm already anticipating difficulty in having a lengthy enough interview to have enough data for the research.

I hope that this fear does not impact future interviews.

Coding

What I find interesting is that (2 LETTERS) uses the word 'shell' quite a few times as well as 'anxious.' I wonder if by not asking more questions about conflict due to miscommunication, I missed out on discovering how exactly forum theatre helped (2 LETTERS) to develop confidence. He relayed that acting and being on stage, performing, and practicing regularly helped him to develop confidence. Nevertheless, I also found that (2 LETTERS) also said he now knows how to handle people better, which also connects with (2 LETTERS)'s suggestion that forum theatre helped him to explore and understand communication.

Biases & Preconceptions

I have to admit that I had the bias that (2 LETTERS) used drugs, was involved in criminal or semi-peripheral gangs, and drank a lot. However, (2 LETTERS) did not share this information during the interview, and I followed along with how he went. Another bias that I have is that forum theatre impacted (2 LETTERS) heavily to overcome some at-risk behaviours, such as drinking and using drugs. However, I tried to rely on the information provided by him during the interview and based the coding and data analysis on the data alone rather than my outside knowledge or pre-conceptions about (2 LETTERS)'s struggles of settling into Canada.

(Ann/Participant 3)

Recruitment & Interview (December 2, 2011)

(Ann) was another youth recruited through the Centre for Newcomers. She was in the Youth Possibilities Program and had also worked at the Centre for Newcomers after completing the program. (Ann) learned about the research through her former supervisor who had forwarded the recruitment poster to contacts via e-mail.

The interview was good in terms of (Ann) answering the questions and being forthcoming. At the same time, I perceived that she was holding back a little bit or presented as a little reserved (despite the laughter and details in her responses), and I wondered if it was because of me, as I found myself holding back, because I was aware that her mum had just been diagnosed with cancer and that (Ann) was impacted by that. There were many moments throughout the interview

when (Ann) appeared to be stirred up or emotional; e.g. teary eyed, and I failed to ask further questions, which may have given me more in-depth answers.

(Ann) was not as highly-barriered as the other participants I've interviewed thus far. When she came to Canada, she had been well educated, and was from a financially successful family, so she may have experienced culture shock in terms of having to not having and going from school to work. (Ann) did not seem to have been involved in typical at-risk behaviours, but I wonder if I should have asked her a little bit more about those typical at-risk behaviours her peers were involved in and what she thought about their involvement.

The interview gave some great insight into how forum theatre helped (Ann) to discover and understand her feelings. There is a richness in (Ann)'s insights that I look forward to delving into deeper.

Coding

Initial themes that repeatedly come up for (Ann) have been anger because of the stressed relationship with her dad. (Ann) recognised that because of forum theatre she actually understood that she was angry. Anger is not a concept that occurs in (Ann)'s culture of origin. Another theme that arose from this transcript is reflection and insight. This theme is repeated at least five times in this initial look at the data.

Biases & Preconceptions

In reflecting about my biases, I think that I had an expectation that (Ann) would be less at-risk than she may have been. She did say that she had stopped communicating with her family and that there was a relationship breakdown in her family, which is one of the risk factors for youth; e.g. lack of familial support. I believed that (Ann) was emotionally impacted by her mother's current diagnose of cancer and I did not deepen the interview because I was wary of stirring (Ann) up emotionally. However, my preconception that she was not strong enough, which caused me to exhibit a rescuing behaviour, meant that I did not allow (Ann) to utilise her current feelings and connectedness with her family to help her recall how broken the relationship had been and how forum theatre would have impacted that relationship.

Journal Entry December 14, 2014

I have been reviewing my notes extensively and I recognise that a recurring theme that I previously missed is that all of the forum theatre events the youth participated in relate to real life. This is huge, because I believe that this is what Boal was speaking about in *The Rainbow of Desire*. He witnessed and participated in a multitude of events where someone would tell him a story of suffering because of a husband or a neighbour. Through examining alternatives, playing as many options as possible through audience intervention, did the youth recognise that they were experiencing a dichotomy? An opposition of being real and imagined at the same time. How does relating to real life help the youth? Is there a real impact? I have to re-examine the other themes to see if it fits independently from, before or within one of the other meanings.

Appendix G: Results Diagrams







