LIMINALITY AND EMERGING ADULTHOOD:
THE INFLUENCE OF YOUTH PROGRAMS ON SELF-IDENTITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study deals with the influence of a liminal experience on the development of self-identity among Canadian emerging adults. The author relates the experiences of four participants in Katimavik, a Canadian national youth service-learning program. This study indicates that Katimavik can be a liminal experience for the participants. The insight derived from the narratives of the participants shows the relationship between the liminal aspects of the program and the heightened awareness of the participants' self-identity. As a form of experiential education, liminal experiences are described as a way to facilitate the development of self-identity awareness for participants.

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"Knowing others is intelligence; knowing oneself is wisdom.
Mastering others is strength; mastering oneself is true power."
Lao-Tzu, 6th century BCE

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In adolescence, the development of a stable identity is a key developmental task (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). However, societal changes in Western societies in the past decades have blurred the passage from adolescence to adulthood and have promoted a longer timeframe for identity explorations (Arnett, 2000; Banister & Piacenitini, 2008). Thus, identity development continues through late adolescence and into the twenties (Arnett, 2000, 2007b; Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2009), a span of life termed "emerging adulthood". Unlike the term "young adult", which implies that adulthood has been reached, emerging adulthood indicates that the passage from adolescence to adulthood is in process. In Western societies, emerging adulthood has become a distinct period of the life course: for most people, it is a time characterized by change and exploration as they explore available possibilities and gradually commit to more choices in life, careers, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood recognises that the passage into adulthood is now such a lengthy process that it is more complex than a simple transition: it is a separate period of the life course. We see that people between 18 and 28 often no longer feel like adolescents, yet they often do not feel like full adults; they feel "in-between" (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007) and are continually developing their identity. Although the exploration of identity elements is a key feature of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2007a), the opportunities to perform such explorations are not available equally for all persons.

In looking at identity development, Erikson's (1963) research led to the psychosocial approach, which proposes that identity is influenced not only by people's inner thoughts and feelings, but also by the social and environmental context in which people live (Beyers & Çok, 2008; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Kroger, 2004). Following this psychosocial approach, studies

have linked identity development to a variety of social, psychological and education domains, such as outdoor education, theatre, visual arts, geography, adventure travel, and service-learning (Des Marais, Farzanehkia, & Yang, 2000; Duerden, Widmer, Taniguchi, & McCoy, 2009; Halverson, 2010; Loeffler, 2005; Moir-Bussy, 2003; Proshansky, 1978; Stalker & West, 2007). These are opportunities to develop one's self-identity in emerging adulthood, to which we could add liminality, in the context of youth programs.

Liminality refers to a state of being on a threshold in one's psychological and/or social reality, a time and space of being 'betwixt and between.' In liminality, one can experience the deconstruction of social structures of everyday life, such as social hierarchies and gender roles, and find oneself between different role statuses, without being grounded in either (Turner, 1967). For example, rituals such as baptism, marriage, or traditional rites of passage into adulthood constitute liminal experiences. Groups of people can experience liminality together, for example, during graduation ceremonies, political or social revolutions, or in dealing with natural disasters. Liminality suspends the social reality of participants; commitments to the fixed and structured social categories from which they came and towards which they will integrate are blurred (Cody & Lawlor, 2011).

This study will describe and bring meaning to the liminal aspects of a Canadian national youth volunteer-service program, Katimavik. Liminal aspects of the program, such as being separated from home, living in a new environment, the opportunity to experience different ways of being, and post-program re-integration will be explained in terms of their relation with the development of self-identity of participants.

Katimavik was created in 1977 to give the opportunity to young Canadians to learn more about their own country and about themselves. Currently, its mission is to "engage youth in volunteer service and foster sustainable communities through challenging national youth learning

programs" (Katimavik, n.d., Our Mission section, para. 1). Participants, emerging adults aged 17 to 21, are placed in groups of 11 and live together for six to nine months, in communities located in different regions of Canada. For participants, the program consists of volunteer-service with not-for-profit organisations and actively taking part in an experiential learning program. There are no costs for participation, which encourages the intermingling of people from all areas of the country and of different socio-economic realities. Since its inception, over 30 000 Canadians have participated in the program; in 2010-2011 alone, over 600 youth completed the program in 64 communities, working with more than 500 partner organisations (Salvador, D'Autray Tarte, & Aylen, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the influence of liminality on the development of self-identity for Canadian emerging adults participating in Katimavik. Liminality and self-identity development have both been explored at length in the past few decades (Kroger, 2007; Thomassen, 2009), but rarely in conjunction with each other in the context of emerging adulthood. This study will contribute to the field of study by giving a phenomenological account of the relationship between liminality and the development of self-identity in the context of a Canadian youth service-learning program.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of youth programs, past research has explored relationships between experiential learning, commitment and purpose, social development, group bonding, and self-identity (Duerden & Gillard, 2011; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 2002). Through phenomenological analysis, this study will seek to describe the relationship between a liminal experience in a youth program (experiential learning) and the development of self-identity in participating emerging adults. The theoretical foundation of this study will be based on Turner's

(1967) original model of liminality and its three essential phases: separation, transition and incorporation.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study, both tying into each other to create links between identity development and liminal aspects of Katimavik. These questions have been posed because they can help to better understand and bring meaning to liminal experiences for Canadian emerging adults.

1. What is the impact of a liminal experience on the self-identity of individuals?

2. Would a Katimavik program be considered a liminal experience?

Location of the Study

The scope of this study is delimited to empirical accounts of 4 Canadian individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 who have taken part in Katimavik at a time between March 2010 and March 2012. The participants took part in interviews in the spring of 2012. Publicly available information about Katimavik is also used in this study.

Definition of Terms

Emerging adulthood: The stage of life between late adolescence and the early twenties. The term *emerging adulthood* was created to reflect the idea that it now takes longer to reach adulthood, and that a new period of life has developed between the end of the teen years and the attainment of young adulthood. Emerging adulthood is proposed to be only present in cultures that allow young people a prolonged period of independent role exploration during this age span (Arnett, 2000).

Self-identity: An individual's mental perception of him or herself: a clear self-definition encompassing goals, values and beliefs to which a person in committed (Waterman, 1984).

Identity development: The process of creating a sense of self by integrating past personal experiences with new identity elements developed through exploration and commitment (Duerden, 2006).

Liminality: Derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold. Liminality is a state of being on a threshold in one's psychological and/or social reality, in a time and place of "withdrawal from normal modes of social action" (Turner, 1969, p. 167).

Assumptions

In performing this study, I acknowledge the assumption that many Canadian emerging adults are in the process of developing and asserting their self-identity. I also acknowledge that this study will not separate individuals according to different characteristics such as gender, class, colour, sexual orientation, ability, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status or exact age. Although these characteristics may have an impact on the experience of participants in liminality and may also provide interesting insights into the outcomes of the research, this depth of analysis is beyond the feasible scope of the present study.

In addition, I acknowledge the assumption that although a liminal experience can contribute to the development of self-identity, it is not essential to this development. Hence, I wish to focus on the descriptions of the impact that a liminal experience may have on participants' self-identities, not on whether it is essential to or causes the development of self-identity.

Significance of the Study

The traditional education system of contemporary Western societies has been the target of scholarly critiques from many different angles, including research on experiential learning, deschooling, indigenous knowledge and alternative forms of education, among others (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Illich, 1971; Kolb, 1984; Miller, 1997; Neugebauer, Venegas, & Villegas,

2008; Rosen, 1972). My study will contribute to this body of literature by placing liminality within the field of learning and development, looking at its influence on the self-identity of participants in the context of Katimavik. To do so, I will take liminality, originally devised as a concept in anthropology, and apply it to experiential learning.

Given the positive outcomes associated with identity development and the assertion that identity development is a key developmental task (Erikson, 1968; Phoenix, 2001), a liminal experience, if observed to positively influence the development of self-identity, could benefit emerging adults. This study aims to meaningfully describe whether the liminal experience offered by Katimavik fosters the development of self-identity. To do so, a strong understanding of the current body of knowledge concerning liminality and identity development is needed.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the influence of liminality on the development of self-identity for Canadian emerging adults participating in a Katimavik program. To address this question and situate my study within the literature, I will present a review of the literature touching on liminality and identity development. The review will focus on the following topics:

1. Liminality – (a) Definitions and History; (b) Liminality and Psychology; (c) Rites of Passage; (d) Business and Organisations; and (e) Liminality and Learning.

2. Identity – (a) Definitions and History; (b) Identity and Sociology and Psychology; (c) Development and Youth; and (d) Turning Points.

Liminality – Definitions and History

The concept of liminality was first introduced in the field of anthropology by Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in his 1909 book *Rites de Passage*, where he proposed a model of rites of passage that included three stages, namely *separation, transition* and *incorporation*. The term "liminality" – from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold – was used to explain a state of threshold or transition between the phases of separation and incorporation. Although the concept was devised in the early 20th century, it wasn't until the late 1960s that its potentiality was explored. In a wave of renewed interest in theoretical developments in French anthropology in the 1960s, van Gennep's work was translated into English and fell into the hands of British anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983) who was conducting ethnographic studies on Ndembu rituals in Zambia at the time (Thomassen, 2009). By exploring the original writings on liminality and seeing how they described what he was witnessing in Zambia, "Turner *experientially* recognized the importance of van Gennep's insight" (Thomassen, 2009, p. 13, emphasis in original). Subsequently, Turner dedicated much of his research to liminality and rites of passage (see:

Turner, 1967; 1969; 1974; 1985) and is credited with popularizing the concept in modern anthropology (Thomassen, 2009). Indeed, in the various interpretations and definitions of liminality available today, one will often find the phrase "betwixt and between" – Turner (1967) used this idiom when explaining liminality, describing the state of being on the threshold of positions assigned by society, customs, and conventions.

Since the essence of liminality is difficult to define concisely, many interpretations of the term have been presented (Banister, 2008; Bigger, 2009; Conroy, 2004; Horvath, Thomassen, & Wydra, 2009; Szakolczai, 2009; Thomassen, 2009). As a concept of flexible applicability, it has been used in a variety of fields outside of anthropology.

Liminality and Psychology

In the field of psychology, liminality has been linked to feelings of uncertainty and fear resulting from a perceived loss of structure and a sudden disruption in the habitual roles and customs of life (Elliott, 2011). Conversely, Irving and Young (2004) propose that liminality has a great potential to aid in creating a safe space. By constructing spaces of liminality, they observed that people came together and were more able to negotiate diversity, conflict, and issues of subjectivity. It appears that the loss of hierarchies of rank and status that occurs in liminality gave people the freedom to focus on their interactions as equals, rather than feel anxious about uncertainty or unpredictability of the present and future.

An acute sense of awareness and reflexion are recurrent themes in literature touching upon liminality and psychology. Kelly (2008), for example, studied the experiences of people who were terminally ill, on the threshold of death. These challenging psychological episodes of "living loss" were examined through the lens of liminality and revealed shifts in awareness levels of the self's psychological and social reality. Turner (1967) explains that participants in liminality are withdrawn from their habitual positions and structure, and consequently from the

values, norms, and expectations associated with those positions. During the liminal period, they have the opportunity to think about "their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them" (p. 105). Thus, liminality may be described as a stage of reflection, a period to critically examine one's own culture and society: its central values, customs and axioms (Turner, 1969). This opportunity to critically reflect on one's culture can lead to a shift in participants' worldviews.

Liminality and Rites of Passage

As mentioned above, the study of rites of passage led to the conceptualization of liminality (van Gennep, 1960/1909; Turner, 1967). More recently, contemporary rites of passage in Western societies have been explored in terms of their impact on people's lives. Travel, for example, including border crossing and feelings of being neither a local nor a foreigner but rather someone 'in between', could be considered as a modern example of a rite of passage (Moir-Bussy, 2003). For some emerging adults, the transitions inherent in the experience of one's first year of post-secondary studies could be construed as a rite of passage, of which frosh events may play a considerable part (Palmer, O'Kane, & Owens, 2009). Frosh, hazing and other initiation rituals continue to exist in present day Western societies, often as liminal rites of passage into select groups, clubs, or teams (Anderson, McCormack, & Lee, 2012; Winslow, 1999).

Liminality and Business and Organisations

Aspects of liminality, such as separation, ritualization, and communitas, have been shown to have a positive impact in the field of organisation studies. Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd, and Bourque (2010) show that business retreats and team meetings were more successful in terms of desired outcomes when aspects of liminality were present in the event. Although the final stage of incorporation is a key aspect of the liminal process to ensure that participants return to society and act upon their learnings from the experience, it was not factored into their research.

Liminality can affect people on an individual level, but it can also impact organisational learning in terms of temporary teams, individualized workers, freelance consultants and strategic networking (Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011; Sturdy, Schwarz, & Spicer, 2006; Tempest & Starkey, 2004). Although the use of liminality is usually not overt, its potential to create beneficial changes in organisations has been gaining recognition (Johnson et al., 2010).

Liminality and Learning

Education, and higher education in particular, has also been the topic of liminality-related studies. For example, liminality was applied as a framework in the analysis of the final stage of teacher preparation as a contemporary rite of passage (Cook-Sather, 2006) as well as in the analysis of the experience of undergraduate "student consultants" in a post-secondary institution (Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011). In the context of students in the field of social work, liminality was seen as influential in the development of new self-understandings and meanings for students (Hurlock et al., 2008). In addition to higher education, the concept has been used to explore relationships between the learning environment and the experience of the learners, for example in a post-industrial urban setting (Bettis, 1996). Duerden and Witt (2010) explored the relationships between the social environment and the learning experience: group bonding was shown to have a significant impact on youth program outcomes. Although they did not explicitly refer to liminality or to the social concept of communitas, their description of the youth program indicates that their research examined a liminal period for the participants.

Identity – Definitions and History

The concept of identity came to prominence in the field of psychology in the 1960s, heavily influenced by Eric Erikson (1902-1994) as part of his psychosocial growth model (Erikson, 1963). According to the psychosocial approach, self-identity is not only determined by one's own thoughts, but is also influenced by one's social surroundings (Chryssochoou, 2003;

Grotevant & Cooper, 1998). Thus, it is the consolidation of the psychological and social aspects of one's self that creates the identity; a strong self-identity involves the ability to recognize differences and similarities between oneself and people around us. Through the balance in identity differences and similarities, a person can be a part of society while still retaining a sense of their unique individuality (Marcia, 1980). In this way, people with a strong and positive self-identity tend to enjoy a sense of balance between their own self-perceptions and feedback from their social surroundings (Josselson, 1980). Identity development has been the focus of much research and has been linked to different fields.

Identity and Sociology and Psychology

Processes involved in the development of self-identity have been studied in relation to the social context, where identity is suggested to be a particular form of social representation that integrates both the individual and the social world (Chryssochoou, 2003). As a link between social regulations and psychological organisation, identity serves as a context within which worldviews are constructed, communicated and defended. Through active participation in the social world (relationships, learning and enactment), it is argued that people construct a set of knowledge about the world and themselves; thus, their identity is built from social and psychological influences. The representation of identity has also been a source of inquiry: the use of narrative to share one's perception of self-identity has been suggested as valuable and meaningful (Hammack, 2008; McLean & Pratt, 2006).

Identity and Development and Youth

In relation to adolescence, emerging adulthood, and young adulthood, the literature concerning the mechanisms of identity development is scattered and diverse. For example, the topic has been studied in the context of changes in environments (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002), cognitive abilities (Roeser & Lau, 2002), and behaviours (Wires, Barocas, & Hollenbeck, 1994).

Forging links between these intervening factors, it has been suggested that identity development in emerging adulthood is a process of interactive person-context transactions (Beyers & Çok, 2008; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). Different factors can also act as barriers to the development of self-identity by limiting emerging adults' opportunities to build a stable and coherent identity (Yoder, 2000). Inefficient educational opportunities or political restrictions could be identity barriers, for example. These barriers could stunt the development of self-identity, and regression in this development is also possible (Waterman, 1999). Regression can take place when a commitment to a perceived self-identity element (e.g. spiritual or moral belief, environmental worldview) is abandoned.

Identity and Turning Points

Lastly, identity development has been studied in relation to turning points, where a specific episode is perceived to create a substantial change in a person's life (McLean & Pratt, 2006). Narrative construction of a turning point memory has been suggested to be key in the meaning-making process of such events (McLean & Breen, 2009). Turning points that have been studied in relation to the development of self-identity include experiences relating to the loss of a loved one (Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004), participation in social movements (Yang, 2000), travel (Noy, 2004b), or structured outdoor adventure recreation (Duerden & Gillard, 2011). This present study will add to these by deriving meaning from the participation in a youth program, an experience that could be a turning point in many participants' lives.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

As stated above, the purpose of this study is to understand the influence of liminality on the development of self-identity for Canadian emerging adults participating in a Katimavik program. This chapter will outline the methods of the study. The following areas will be covered: (a) General Approach, (b) Research Design, (c) Participants, (d) Data Collection, (e) Data Analysis, and (f) Ethical issues associated with the research.

General Approach

The topic for this research was generated from my personal interest in exploring the liminal aspect of programs that I have been involved with in the past. Through my involvement with organisations such as Canada World Youth, Destination Clic, Encounters with Canada, J'explore, la Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, the Forum for Young Canadians, Francophonie Jeunesse de l'Alberta, the Ship for World Youth, the Otesha Project, Katimavik, and others, I have witnessed the positive short-term and medium-term impact of these projects and programs on many youth and emerging adults, and have heard narratives of positive long-term effects as well. A few of these organisations' programs have been the source of focused studies (see: EEC Canada, 2002; Ekos Research Associates, 2008; R. A. Malatest, 2008), which mostly examined the public perception of service-learning as well as the economic and social impacts of the programs. These studies demonstrated the value of experiential learning and showed, qualitatively and quantitatively, a relationship between participation in a service-learning experience and positive self-discovery. However, at this time, there is no known research concerning the *liminal* nature of the programs offered by these organisations: this is the gap that this study will attempt to fill, focusing on Katimavik. The main challenge posed by this study is how to assess the liminal aspect of an experience, since change engendered by taking part in a program could be brought about by a variety of factors, liminality being one of them.

I will use a phenomenological approach to reach the goals of this study and to answer the questions brought up in the introduction. These were:

1. What is the impact of a liminal experience on the self-identity of individuals?

2. Would a Katimavik program be considered a liminal experience?

In line with the description of phenomenological studies by Seidman (2006), the participants were involved as partners in the study: their experience in their Katimavik program was explored and debriefed to create a meaningful description of what took place. Since the main objective of a phenomenological study is to describe and understand the subjective experience of life (Drew, 2001), I analysed the data in order to see how the participants in the study perceived their self-identity to have been influenced by their Katimavik experience and its liminal aspects. Also, I acknowledge that this study does not encompass everything that could be learned on this topic, as meaning that can be understood from experiences is never truly complete but can always be further expanded.

Research Design

Since this study seeks to understand a phenomenon, a qualitative approach is used. Qualitative inquiry aims to uncover meaning in experience, and recognizes that all knowledge and forms of inquiry are interpretive (Creswell, 2009). The participants in this study were asked to share their experience and perceptions in a self-reflective manner; the study sought to describe the meaningfulness of the experience as shared through the participants' narratives in order to derive themes linking liminality to the development of self-identity.

As is implied by the use of a phenomenological research method, the results of the study are not meant to infer generalisations or to compare between groups of people. For these reasons, the research design did not include a comparative group.

The number of participants was delimited to four Katimavik alumni who were all interviewed individually. Individual interviews ensured that the participants spoke their own truth, without being pressured to agree with or shy away from statements because of perceived social pressures. The interview questions were open-ended to allow for the most candid self-reflection (see Appendix A).

Participants

The empirical accounts are taken from interviews with 4 participants between the ages of 19 to 23 years. The participants had taken part in Katimavik within the 24 months preceding the interview and were recruited through email invitations facilitated by past staff and volunteers of the organisation. As a principal investigator, I had had no previous contact with the participants. Although individual characteristics such as gender, class, colour, sexual orientation, ability, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status or age may be significant in the development of self-identity, this study could not feasibly use these characteristics as variables. An ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria and all participants signed consent forms. To ensure anonymity, all names have been changed.

Data Collection

The data for this phenomenological study were derived from interviews with the participants. The interview format involved prompt questions that touched upon the topics explored in the study: liminality and self-identity development. The questions were designed to encourage self-reflection and open sharing of the participants' personal experience of their program. The interviews were structured to bring the participants to re-visit their experience in a critical fashion and to have the participants reflect upon the impact of the experience on their own self-identity.

The interviews took place in the spring and summer of 2012. The interviews were conducted by Internet telephone and recorded in audio format. Key moments in the interviews were transcribed and safely stored in the researcher's computer. The participants did not review the transcript of their interview.

Procedures for Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data involves uncovering key themes, reoccurring concepts, motifs and expressions (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The interview transcripts were read through in order to obtain a general sense of their meaning. This process of reading through the data was repeated in order to identify important passages. When analyzing the interview transcripts, I identified and grouped reoccurring patterns into categories. I then examined the categories in more detail to uncover links between them, which I consolidated into three key themes. These themes will be further explored in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

This chapter describes the results of the interviews conducted in the spring and summer of 2012. These findings begin to show how the participants' comments contribute to answering the research questions as laid out in chapter one: 1) What is the impact of a liminal experience on the self-identity of individuals? and 2) Would a Katimavik program be considered a liminal experience?

The four participants in this study came from different parts of Canada and each had a unique experience with Katimavik.

Nathaniel took part in Katimavik in 2010-2011. Originally from Scarborough, ON, he was 19 years old at the beginning of the program. The three communities where his group was placed were between 8000 and 60,000 in population.

Jasper took part in Katimavik in 2010-2011. Originally from Calgary, AB, he was 19 years old at the beginning of the program. The three communities where his group was placed were between 10,000 and 60,000 in population.

Jacquelyne took part in Katimavik in 2011. Originally from Langley, BC, she was 20 years old at the beginning of the program. The three communities where her group was placed were between 8000 and 10,000 in population.

Charlotte took part in Katimavik in 2011-2012. Originally from Dartmouth, NS, she was 19 years old at the beginning of the program. Her group was placed in a single community, which had a population of 10,000.

Three main themes emerged from the interviews. These themes are closely related to Turner's (1967) original three stages of liminality: separation, transition and incorporation. The first theme, being disconnected from home and stepping outside of one's comfort zones, relates to the stage of separation. The second theme, self-confidence to be one's true self and support

from group members, is connected to the stage of transition. The final theme, the challenge of explaining the impact of the experience to others, is a post-liminal aspect of the experience, related to the stage of incorporation. These themes will now be explored in terms of their meaning for the participants.

BEING DISCONNECTED FROM HOME AND STEPPING OUTSIDE OF ONE'S COMFORT ZONES

"Getting away from home, and getting away from what you're so used to, for something totally different… It just opens you up to so many possibilities. That disconnect from everyday life is really needed. I think this disconnect is one of the big parts of it." – Jacquelyne

The separation from one's regular home life is integral to any liminal experience. The separation can be physical, emotional and/or social and, in the case of Katimavik, each participant lives his or her separation differently. This *disconnect*, in Jacquelyne's terms, opens the door to a multitude of opportunities that would be unthinkable for a typical Canadian youth. Charlotte, recollecting what she had lived during her time in the program, reflected in a similar manner: "At home, you get limited by your ideas of what you could do." The ownership of the program is gradually transferred to the participants as they become more aware of the requirements of the program and the potential it holds. In Charlotte's experience, there were no limits to what her group could accomplish, each person being physically (and also perhaps emotional and socially) disconnected from their pre-liminal lives and, hence, fully attuned and involved in the program, in the present moment. The otherworldliness of Katimavik and the strength of a group seemed to remove the habitual perceived limits on what one thinks one can do.

Jacquelyne, reflecting once more on the disconnect that she experienced, recollects the first few weeks of the program:

"We are all a little bit attached to home pretty strongly. And I think we all kinda realised that we needed to let go a little bit more. That we should make the most of the time we have: 'Why did you come here if you're just gonna be living at home anyways?'"

Separating from one's pre-liminal life may prove to be quite difficult, especially in this age of technology and communications where participants can stay connected to their usual social circle in a multitude of ways. With the use of personal communication devices, participants could very well keep in constant (virtual) social contact with their home lives. The realisation that some participants come to, as we see from Jacquelyne's comments, is that time in the liminal world of Katimavik is limited and that living the present moment, by taking a step back from one's home life, can engender a more fruitful and meaningful experience. The acknowledgement that the program is likely a once-in-a-lifetime experience may help trigger this realization.

"[Katimavik] keeps me active and makes me try things that I wouldn't normally try. And takes me out of my comfort zone… Puts me in a different world, like takes me out of my normal teenage world I'm in, and puts me in a somewhere else to experience something."
– Jasper

Being disconnected from home and being challenged by different aspects of the program prompted the participants to step out of their comfort zones. By trying new things, which could be as simple as trying different foods or as complex as learning a second language, participants had the opportunity to engage in experiential learning. The participants shared feelings of challenge and excitement in having the chance to do so, as it is a different approach to learning than their typical school upbringing. Charlotte mentions that:

"Katimavik gives way more of an opportunity to experience totally unique experiences. You're thrown into a completely different world… you're really open to trying new

things, open to different experiences, which you wouldn't necessarily be if you were in your normal, comfortable, everyday hum-drum life."

Participants recognized the value of leaving their comfort zones, for example, in terms of learning potential and gaining life experiences. In the end, the difficulty of separation and the challenges of stepping out of comfort zones were perceived as worthwhile.

SELF-CONFIDENCE TO BE ONE'S TRUE SELF AND SUPPORT FROM GROUP MEMBERS

"You have the freedom to be someone you weren't before. Or someone you were before, but wasn't necessarily on the surface." – Nathaniel

Katimavik gives participants the opportunity to live withdrawn from the habitual expectations of their social surroundings. As emerging adults between the ages of 17 to 21, participants experience the freedom from labels and reputation that may be tagged to them in their own community. Nathaniel's comment above speaks to the opportunity to be his true self while in the program.

When participants meet their group for the first time, everyone is a stranger. They are from all corners of the country and no one knows anything about each other's lives, skills, strengths and weaknesses, social status, or reputations. For example, as Jacquelyne mentions: "It's nice that no one knows how you did in school, 'cuz that doesn't matter." Every person's story is a "blank slate", as Nathaniel points out, a situation that creates a level ground where each individual has equal value in the group.

This temporary erasure of past reputations and roles creates equality between every participant, which is an important factor of group liminal experiences. Nevertheless, even if Katimavik participants gain a freedom to be themselves, the decision to experiment with different ways of being is up to each individual. Even though pre-liminal distinctions of rank and status may disappear, participants still have the choice to live the liminal experience in the same

fashion as their pre-liminal life. The opportunity to change is given, but the choice remains with the individual. As Nathaniel says: "[Katimavik] gave me the opportunity to be (…) who I was, but to try to be that same person in a different way… and then come home and implement these new discoveries."

Participants often mentioned group living as a determining factor in the Katimavik experience. Indeed, it is a lifestyle quite separate from the norm in which most emerging adults in Western societies have been brought up. Participants live together in a single house and must learn to share responsibilities for its upkeep. The communal life is a new social reality as well, where relationships impact every aspect of daily life. As time goes by, living in such close proximity with ten peers, a micro-community, or *communitas*, emerges.

In the case of Charlotte's Katimavik experience, the atmosphere in her group was one of true communitas, as she states that Katimavik "isn't just living collectively. You're collectively living. All you could think about is what you're doing as a group. It kinda felt like I was definitely in another place." The group experience may begin to take on a life of its own that exceeds the sum of its part (the lives of the individual participants). All interviewees mentioned peer social support as a critical factor in their Katimavik experience.

"[Katimavik] is such a supportive atmosphere (…) you're kinda all thrown in all together. It makes a huge difference, that atmosphere." – Charlotte

The community created in a Katimavik program encourages social interactions (for example, there is no television in the houses), and the participants work full time as volunteers in community organisations. The variety of social interactions as well as the different work placements allows the participants to not only develop their self-identity, but also to better understand the role they play in their community and their society. For Jasper, this meant that Katimavik helped to develop a sense of self in society: "You need to get to know yourself, to

know how to work with yourself so you're able to work with other people." For the participants, Katimavik was instrumental in bringing forth the awareness that they play a crucial role in society, and this acknowledgement had an impact on their self-identity. Nathaniel's comment exemplifies this: "[In Katimavik,] there was a much greater self-actualization of who I was and who I wanted to be."

THE CHALLENGE OF EXPLAINING THE IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS

"Katimavik is just a completely different world." – Jasper

"I don't think I could ever properly just explain what it meant to me or how it changed me."

– Jacquelyne

Relating the experience to family and friends once back home was unanimously perceived to be a formidable challenge, if not downright impossible. As Charlotte explains: "You can't explain to other people who haven't [done Katimavik]… because their frame of reference is totally different." Nathaniel speaks of the great challenge of explaining the value of such a program: "The only way to truly understand it is to experience it yourself." Although the participants tried to explain their Katimavik experience to their social circle once back home, they did not feel that it was a true rendering of the meaning of the experience. The intensity of a Katimavik experience – impacting the psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual selves – can bring participants to a new awareness of their self-identity and of their society. This development in one's self-identity can sometimes clash with the perceived identities that their family and friends had pre-Katimavik. Perhaps Jacquelyne best sums up the hard reality of trying to put the experience into words: "You go through so much. I feel like I changed so much, but they still see as the same. I feel like I fail to explain it properly at all."

In addition, the impact of the experience does not end when the program ends: "I expect it to have an impact on my daily life for the rest of my life. I don't expect it to stop," said

Nathaniel. Katimavik does not end with a final exam or dissertation: participants are encouraged to take their learnings and continue to be involved, to be engaged citizens, and to further develop their own selves and their community. Jasper, having finished the program over one year before the time of the interview, admits: "I'm trying to figure out how to use what I learnt there, to just push me further. 'That was fun, and I got to do that, so what am I gonna do about it? How am I going to work from there?'" For participants, processing the impact of the experience can take a long time. Indeed, this process is still underway for Charlotte, Jasper, Jacquelyne and Nathaniel.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that participants were faced with many challenges during their experiences in Katimavik, which seems to have had an impact on their awareness of their self-identity. I stress that the impact seems to be on the *awareness* of one's self-identity rather than on the self-identity itself, i.e. transformations in self-identity could not be inferred from the data, but rather a heightened awareness and confidence in existing self-identity. This impact was not of equal force or value for every participant. This study reveals a consistency with other research that examined the impact of experiential learning on the development of self-identity (Duerden, 2006; Duerden & Witt, 2010; Learie, 2009; Noy, 2004b), and adds to the literature by using liminality as a lens to examine these developments. This study also shows that there are various facets of the participants' experiences that correlate with the conceptualization of liminality as described earlier.

This chapter will elaborate on the themes that emerged from the interview analysis while displaying the liminal aspects of a Katimavik experience and their relationship with the self-identity of participants.

BEING DISCONNECTED FROM HOME AND STEPPING OUTSIDE OF ONE'S COMFORT ZONES

The first stage of a liminal experience, separation, is meant to bring the participants out of their habitual life and into the unknown. The separation in Katimavik comes from leaving one's home and travelling to a different part of the country. Research has shown that travel can be construed as a way to undergo self-change (Moir-Bussy, 2003; Noy, 2004b), and is also a clear first step in beginning a liminal experience (Goodnow, 2008). In the case of Katimavik, travelling and disconnecting from home is paired with a potential for detachment from a previously existing role and social structure. Participants have the opportunity to shed past reputations and to experiment with different ways of life, which is analogous to a liminal

experience (Noble & Walker, 1997). The disconnect brings the participants to withdraw from the structural positions which they held in their pre-Katimavik lives, and they are less tied to the habits, values, norms, and expectations usually associated with those positions. They are highly encouraged to step out of their comfort zones.

Similarly to Duerden and Witt's (2010) research on socialization in youth programs, most participants in this study mentioned that they had left their comfort zones at one point or another during the program, trying new things and experimenting with different ways of being. Stepping out of their comfort zones seems to have had a positive effect on the participants, in terms of self-confidence, self-worth, accomplishments and overcoming challenges. Liminality encourages experimenting with different ways of living and the intermingling types of events, situations, and knowledge. Moreover, liminality breaks with customs and feeds speculations that would be unimaginable in everyday life, with the intention of cultivating learning (Turner, 1967). Katimavik encourages all of these aspects of liminality, by bringing together emerging adults from all parts of Canada into one community and opening doors for the participants to step out of their comfort zones and to learn something from the experience.

Katimavik participants are exposed to a new environment that is independent from the influences of their usual life of school, family and peers. Such a separation facilitates the discovery of new abilities and the exploration of different skills, interests, and ways of being (Duerden, 2006). The support from group members allows participants to commit to ways of being and to choose to integrate these new learnings into their self-identity. Marcia (1980) suggests that it is through the dual processes of exploration and commitment that self-identity is developed; Katimavik, as a liminal experience, provides ample opportunities for these processes (i.e. separation, new experiences, relationships, group bonding, experiential service-learning).

SELF-CONFIDENCE TO BE ONE'S TRUE SELF AND SUPPORT FROM GROUP MEMBERS

Turner's (1967) conceptualisation of liminality includes the dissolution of institutionalised roles, which allows people to "be themselves" (p. 100). Being oneself, recognising one's strengths and limitations, experimenting with various identity elements and possibly committing to some of them: all this took place in the participants' Katimavik experiences, at different levels. The commitment to new identity elements ties into Katimavik's learning objectives, a competency-based approach which aims to inspire participants to grow, develop and learn through experience. These same ideas are indicated in Howard-Grenville et al. (2011), where the dissolution of the 'normal' role and status structures from the pre-liminal lives of participants encourages reflection and learning, but also "playfulness and the exploration of new possibilities" (p. 525).

In Katimavik, the potential to re-invent oneself is wholly parallel to a liminal experience, where the undoing of one's past reputations and the experimentation with new ways of being are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the redesign of old assumptions into new approaches to life (Turner, 1967). The idea of participants having a "blank slate," mentioned by Nathaniel in an interview, also appears in Turner (1969, p. 103); Katimavik participants have the opportunity to be themselves in liminality, to be free from the habitual social dynamics of their pre-liminal lives, such that they are left to develop relationships as they will and interact liberally, free from social roles. Brinthaupt and Lipka (2002) indicate that youth programs can "provide a setting in which youth can simultaneously enact multiple social roles" (p. 300); Katimavik allows emerging adults to do just that, while supplying the social support to do so.

The support of the group is a key aspect of the participants' Katimavik experiences, and is also a key concept of transition, the second stage of a liminal experience. Turner (1969) gives great weight to the communal aspect of transition, explaining that group liminality fosters the

creation of "communitas", a social human connection beyond community or comradeship or society. True communitas is more than acquaintanceship or friendship that happen in everyday life. It is a "transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being" and each person finds in that root something "profoundly communal and shared" (Turner, 1969, p. 138). The social support experienced in Katimavik further encourages participants to experiment with different ways of being and different identity elements. Peer social support, which was mentioned by all interviewees as a critical factor in their Katimavik experience, is key in the process of the social construction of identity (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Head, 1997). Furthermore, the intersection of supportive relationships and the challenge of stepping outside of one's comfort zones was shown to positively impact identity development in adolescents (Duerden, 2006).

As a form of experiential education and as an alternative to the traditional education system, Katimavik offers a stark contrast to the culture found in many schools. Head's (1997) assertion that schools are marked by "competition rather than cooperation, by hierarchies rather than community, by bullying rather than caring" (p. 100) exemplifies how a program such as Katimavik can offer a way of learning that differs from the norm. The cooperation required to make a group succeed, the community established within the group, and the necessity for a caring atmosphere all stand as distinct from the typical school learning environments that participants may have been used to. For emerging adults who may not have had the opportunity to experience learning in any other fashion than the traditional school system, taking part in Katimavik can be an immense challenge in terms of expectations, freedom, responsibility and accountability. We must acknowledge, however, that no single method of learning can be applied to a whole population with a consistent individual "fit". Just as the traditional school system may be a good fit for some individuals and for some subject matters, experiential learning may be a

better fit for others. Katimavik has created partnerships with different post-secondary institutions in Canada to have participation in the program accredited, which displays the organisation's dedication to the learning component of the program.

Katimavik's approach to experiential learning is based on a four-point model: Anticipation, Action, Reflection, and Recognition (AARR). This model, similar to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, aims to foster learning through each facet of an experience. Activities in Katimavik, whether organised by the participants themselves or others, are expected to include the AARR model. This consistent approach to activities acts as a means through which participants can make sense of the experience and understand how to apply the learnings in their own lives. In most experiential learning settings, such as youth programs, the reflection aspect is considered as foundational to the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Kold, 1984). A period of reflection follows the activities of the program, whether these activities be structured and planned or happenstance and random. However, recent research by Duerden and Gillard (2011) suggests that atmosphere and relationships, more so than activities, may be better predictors of youth program success. The relationships within a group, as well as with the surrounding social environment, seem to be key in a program's success in promoting positive development in participants. The model espoused by Katimavik marries both experiential learning activities (e.g. service-learning volunteering, group outings, workshops led by participants or guests, etc.) *and* a social atmosphere (e.g. group living, shared responsibilities, no hierarchy, etc.), which may be a determining factor in the program's success. The activities and the atmosphere are part of the creation of liminality, as exemplified by the exploration of new identity elements through activities and the emergence of communitas in the group.

A heightened awareness of self-identity may in part be due to these liminal aspects of the program. Through the opportunity to be one's true self, to experiment with different ways of

being, and to have the social support to do so, participants can become attuned to existing or new identity elements and perhaps commit to them. Katimavik's experiential learning approach, encouraging reflection on activities as well as a unique social atmosphere of communitas, may be influential in the program's ability to encourage participants to continually challenge themselves and to enact and commit to their self-identity.

THE CHALLENGE OF EXPLAINING THE IMPACT OF THE EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS

The third and final stage of the liminal experience, incorporation, sees the participants return to their home and its social context. The liminal experience is thus consummated: the disconnect is reconnected, the social structure is reinstated (including roles, ranks, and statuses), the group is dissolved, and the participants must fend their way back into a social world from which they were separated for six months or more. After the stages of separation and transition, the participants must face incorporation. Much like in any experiential learning situation, every person will retain different elements from the experience: participants will find themselves somewhere on the continuum between being highly influenced by the experience or thinking that they have not been influenced by it at all. The participants of this study mostly fall in the former category, albeit at different levels.

Liminality can powerfully disrupt one's sense of self or place within society (Beech, 2011), and returning to the structure of society after being between social roles, cultural expectations and statuses for six to nine months is no easy task. Attempting to relate the experience is one way to understand its intensity. Noy (2004a) suggests that the immensity of such an experience lies precisely in the fact that it is "beyond speech, beyond the possibility of words to articulate and communicate referentially" (pp. 123-124). For some people in the incorporation phase, the struggle to explain the experience does not undermine its meaning, but rather enhances it for their own personal understanding of the experience. Campbell (1949)

makes this return to home and relating the experience a defining challenge for the *Hero with a Thousand Faces*: how to represent "in a three-dimensional image, a multi-dimensional meaning?" (p. 218). The frame of reference between participants and their friends and family at home is different, as the experience in liminality is removed from many aspects of home life. It is entirely possible that friends and family may not expect the experience to have been unforgettable, let alone life changing. Participants who return home may be disillusioned by the apparent disinterest or incapacity for people to understand the immensity of the experience. "The returning hero, to complete his adventure, must survive the impact of the world" (p. 226). This study shows that these Katimavik participants faced similar challenges in their incorporation. Whether their self-identity was highly influenced by the experience or not, the challenge of relating the experience was, and is, very real.

A youth program can be a turning point for a participant, creating sudden changes in her or his life, but some research suggests that the change is usually more diffuse, cumulative and gradual (Howard-Grenville et al., 2010; Thurnher, 1983). For many years, participants may continue to reflect upon learnings from Katimavik and use them to better understand their own selves. In effect, research by Allison (2005) and Duerden, Witt, and Taniguchi (2012) shows that participants' development in a youth program does not end at the conclusion of the experience, but can continue for quite some time. Post-program reflection is suggested to be significant in maximising the effect on participants, such as self-identity awareness or behavioural changes, and to transfer the learnings beyond the experience and into other contexts (Duerden et al., 2012). In the case of Katimavik, there is no structured facilitated reflection for the participants once the program ends: the transfer of learning is up to the individuals. Nonetheless, the participants in this study seemed able to incorporate their learnings and their awareness of their self-identity into their post-program lives. Beyond the fact that they could not effectively explain

the intensity of the experience to their social circle, they recognised the experience's meaning for themselves and took it upon themselves to act in commitment with this meaning, whether it be through behaviour, attitudes, or introspection.

The findings from this research provided three main themes relating the heightened awareness of self-identity to the liminal aspects of Katimavik. These findings provide significant messages to educators and others who are involved in creating liminal experiences or who are working towards the development of self-identity in emerging adulthood.

LIMITATIONS TO THE LIMINAL ASPECTS OF KATIMAVIK

Although there are strong areas of correlation between Katimavik and liminality, there are also differences. First, liminality was originally conceptualised as an aspect of rites of passage, a way for people to pass a threshold and enter a new role in their society. Liminality was ritualistic, with ritual leaders and a set structure surrounding the time spent in liminality (Turner, 1967). In Katimavik, there are no overt rituals, and participants are not fully expected to assume a new role after the stage of incorporation. This program is not officially recognised by Canadian society as a rite of passage, which begs the question: does Canadian society recognise anything as a rite of passage? Perhaps the question preceding this one would be: is there such a thing as a uniform "Canadian society"?

Second, ritual leaders, for which Turner (1967) uses the term "tricksters", are also non-existent in Katimavik. The role of a trickster is to lead the participants into liminality and guide them through the process, to be an all-knowing and all-powerful guru. A trickster's role also involves ensuring that participants complete the three stages of liminality by successfully incorporating in the post-liminal. Katimavik groups live with one staff, the Project Leader, who ensures that the program requirements are met and that the experience is safe for all. Project Leaders have different styles of leadership (much like different teachers can teach the same

curriculum in different ways), but are not similar to the trickster in that they are not 'in charge' of a liminal experience per se. Also, they have no official responsibilities regarding incorporation once the program is finished.

Third, post-liminal social support is key in ensuring that the experience is consummated (Turner, 1969). Support from a community shows that the participant has passed a threshold and that there is no going back to the pre-liminal role and status. This support is difficult to sustain for a program such as Katimavik, which sees participants return to their homes in every corner of the country, to communities where people may not recognise the meaningfulness of the experience that they have lived and may in fact expect the participant to return to their pre-liminal roles and status. The support offered by Katimavik is often limited to the final days of debriefing before the return home and to an alumni association, mostly based online. Although there are many ways for alumni to stay involved with the organisation, the impetus is on the individuals: they must act from their own choosing to find ways to enact the new identity elements that may have evolved during the program.

Lastly, pundits of liminality may affirm that participants are, in fact, not participants at all, but rather "initiands", "neophytes" or "liminar." This semantic debate has one key feature: "participant" insinuates that they choose to take part in the experience, whereas in its original form, liminality is imposed on people. For example, a rite of passage from childhood into adulthood cannot be postponed indefinitely: the initiand will be separated from their home and cast into the liminal experience, to be tested and pushed out of their comfort zones and let to explore new ways of being so that they come to realise, with the help of the trickster, the new role that they will carry upon incorporation. An initiand cannot quit during liminality. An initiand cannot choose to contact their friends and family while in liminality. And an initiand cannot be left unchanged by liminality. A Katimavik participant, however, can do all this.

Participants choose to take part in the program, have the choice of quitting, can contact their friends and family, and can complete the program without taking much out of it. Herein lies the largest gap between true liminality and the liminal aspects of Katimavik: the participants' power to choose. Nevertheless, as the concept of liminality has evolved from its beginnings in the anthropological study of rituals, it has been adapted to the modernisation of society: Thomassen (2012), however, warns of the overuse of the concept and the possible dilution of its meaning and potentiality. Although we rarely observe pure liminality in contemporary Western societies, the concept can be applied as a lens to examine modern-day situations such as youth programs.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE VALUE OF THE PROGRAM

In March 2012, the federal government of Canada rescinded on a three-year funding agreement with Katimavik that was due for revision in 2013. Since the program was dependent on the federal government for its funding, Katimavik programs were officially terminated in early summer of 2012. The program, created in 1977, had been cancelled once before, in 1986, before being revived in 1994. Time will tell whether this current interruption of Katimavik will be final or if the program, with its ideals and concepts, will be resurrected once more, perhaps through an alternative funding approach. The benefits of the program, on participants as well as on the communities in which they volunteer, seem to go well beyond the duration of the experience itself, and extend into Canada's social fabric in every corner of the country.

From this study, we see that Katimavik had a positive impact on the participants, and that the impact continues on after the end of the program. The analysis of the interviews gave three themes – a disconnect from home and stepping outside of one's comfort zones, the freedom to be one's true self and support from group members, and the challenge of relating the impact of the experience to others – that were connected to the three stages of liminality: separation, transition, and incorporation. These three themes bring to light the liminal aspects of Katimavik, and the

analysis showed the relationship between liminality and the heightened awareness of self-identity in the participants. Through a phenomenological approach, this study gives meaning to the experiences lived by the participants and argues that the liminal aspects of the program were influential in the experience. However, a Katimavik experience is multi-faceted and intricate, where physical, emotional, psychological, and social factors intersect, along with individuals' culture, worldviews, belief systems and expectations. The program contains many components and, as an experiential learning program, it can be assumed that all aspects of the experience combine to create change, rather that any one factor leading to more significant development outcomes. In light of the limited scope to this study, further research could pursue questions that have risen over the course of this study. For one, the analysis of other factors such as gender, class or culture, and their relationship with liminality in youth programs could show differences in experiences in liminality. The diversity of Katimavik programs also adds a layer of complexity to the findings: research with participants from a single Katimavik group may show variances in people's perceptions of an experience. Lastly, the long-term effects of a liminal experience could be the subject of more research: are any of the effects sustainable over time?

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the influence of liminality on the development of self-identity of Canadian emerging adults participating in Katimavik. This study is based on four empirical accounts of participants' experiences in the program. The results show that three themes emerged from the participants' accounts, which are parallel to the three stages of liminality as conceptualised by Turner (1967). The participants' accounts also gave some insight to the effect of the program on the awareness of their self-identity. The analysis of the findings shows that Katimavik's approach to experiential learning contains elements of liminality, and that these factors may have been influential on the participants' perceived

awareness of self-identity. These findings and propositions are empirically based and limited in terms of potential for generalisations. However, this study may encourage others to draw on such phenomenological resources in future research on the relationship between experiential learning, liminality, and the development of self-identity.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please provide information as to the program with which you were a participant.

2. Without talking about your actual experience during the program, what, if any, were your expectations in your pre-program preparations? – What did you envision the program would be like on a day-to-day basis?

3. While on the program, did you feel like you were very separated from your everyday life?

    a. Did you feel like you were living in a Katimabubble?

    b. Did you keep in frequent contact with your pre-program life; family, emotional, professional, other?

4. Thinking about your self-identity, how would you have described your personality, values and interests before the program?

    a. "Before the program, I identified myself like this: ___. Now I identify myself like this: ___."

5. Do you feel like your self-identity has changed because of your participation in your program? If so, in which way?

    a. Do you think that your experience had a big or a small impact on the change in your self-identity?

6. Do you think this change in your self-identity would have happened anyway if you had not participated in the program?

    a. Were there particular aspects of the program that most impacted the change? for example, was it the volunteering, committees, your PLs, living in the house, being house manager, meeting people in the communities, etc.

7. Describe how you think your current sense of identity compares to that of others who have not participated in such a program.

8. After your program, do you think you were able to effectively share the meaning of the experience to your family and friends? Why or why not, how or how not?

    a. Why do you think they could not 'get it'?

    b. What makes the experience and the emotions lived un-explainable? How is it different than explaining emotions in daily life?

    c. How is it different from trying to explain a vacation or an overseas school trip, for example?

9. Your program ended XX months ago: do you feel that the impact of the experience still affects your daily life? in terms of identity and/or behaviours?

    a. Were these learnings overtly taught, or did they just come about?

    b. Do you think others in your group experienced an evolution of their identity during the program? If so, can you think of a common thing that enabled you to benefit from the program? (since not everyone learned the same things)

10. What aspect of the program encouraged identity development in you and others in your group?

    a. What makes the program unique and different from other learning opportunities that you've had in your life?

11. Do you think an experience like Katimavik would be beneficial for others? Why or why not?