

# YOUTH.HOOD

## EXPLORING NEIGHBOURHOOD BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS FOR YOUTH IN SOUTH VANCOUVER

### Principal Investigator:

Dr. Meghan Winters, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, P: 604-315-0484

### Co-investigator:

Dr. Meg Holden, Urban Studies, Simon Fraser University

### Why are we doing this study?

We want to learn how the design of neighbourhoods in South Vancouver is helping or hindering social connectedness for local youth. We are particularly focused on the neighbourhoods of South Hill, Moberly, Gordon Park, Nanaimo Park, Fraserview East, and Fraserview West. We are inviting youth living in South Vancouver to help us.

### Who is conducting the study?

The study is led by Dr. Meghan Winters and Dr. Meg Holden at Simon Fraser University (SFU), in collaboration with the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. Meridith Sones, PhD Candidate, is conducting this research as part of her graduate thesis.

### Who is funding the study?

The study is being funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Community-Engaged Research Funding Program at SFU.

### Who can participate?

Youth must be between 15 to 19 years of age; live in South Vancouver (west of Boundary Rd, east of Main St, south of 41st Ave, north of the Fraser River); able to walk or move through their community for 60 minutes; and able to read and speak English.

### What will participation involve?

Participants will gather information about their neighbourhoods using a smartphone app and work together with other youth to share ideas for neighbourhood improvement. Youth can choose to participate in up to three research activities:

1. Using a free smartphone app, we will ask youth to take photos and record audio descriptions about features in their neighbourhood that help them connect with others and their community, or make social connectedness difficult. They will do this during a 30-60 minute walk in their local neighbourhood. We have devices available to borrow for youth who want to participate but do not own or have access to a smartphone. The app will map their walking route and the location of photos and audio narratives using Global Positioning System (GPS) data. We will also ask youth to complete a short (10 minute) online survey about their demographics, social connectedness, health, community engagement, and neighbourhood perceptions at the beginning and end of the project to assess changes in project outcomes.

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2. Youth can participate in a 2-hour workshop with other local youth to discuss what they found and work together on ways that their neighbourhood environment can be improved to promote social connectedness.
3. We will invite participants to take a role as a youth leader who will participate in a 2-hour meeting with community partners and urban planners from the City of Vancouver. In this meeting, youth leaders will share the collective findings from the project and present solutions for neighbourhood improvement on behalf of the other youth participants. Before this meeting, youth leaders will receive training in civic engagement to better understand how decisions in cities are made and how to advocate for positive change.

## **How will results from the study be shared?**

Youth participants will receive a summary of their anonymous walk data (including photos, audio narratives and walking routes) during the data workshop. Collective findings from the project will be shared at the community meeting (involving youth participants, partners, and urban planners) and more broadly through scientific papers and meetings, community reports, popular media, and tools like neighbourhood asset maps. Participants will receive copies of the final community report and other knowledge products stemming from the project. We will also invite all participants to share and engage in creative ways for sharing results of the project with a wide audience, such as a photo exhibit. There is no obligation to participate in these activities.

## **Will youth be paid for participating?**

Youth will receive \$25/hour for the time they spend participating in the study even if they choose to withdraw before completion. The study will take between 1.5 and 6.5 hours of time, depending on participation. Participants will be compensated through an e-gift card of their choosing (e.g. grocery store, coffee shop, electronics) and will have an opportunity to share their preferred retailer with the research team at the beginning of the study, during the eligibility process.

## **Can anything bad happen to participants?**

We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm or be bad for participants. The risks involved are the same as taking a walk in your neighbourhood. When using the app to take pictures and audio narratives of their neighbourhood, youth will have the option to walk in self-selected pairs or small groups for safety. They will also have the option of being accompanied by an adult from the project team if they wish.

## **Can anything good happen to participants?**

There may or may not be direct benefits to taking part in this study. The study may help youth by increasing their knowledge about how neighbourhood design can impact the social connectedness of people who live there, and how to advocate for community changes they would like to see. If changes to the community occur because of what youth share and do as part of this project, those changes could help improve the connectedness, health, and wellbeing of the broader community.

## **How will we protect the identity of participants?**

The study investigators respect participant privacy and will do several things to protect it:

- We will ask for the name, email address, and phone number of participants during the eligibility survey in order to contact them to coordinate study activities. We will also ask for participant email addresses in the pre and post survey in order to link responses and assess

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for any changes in outcomes over the course of the study. This information will be stored separately from their survey answers and any data collect using the smartphone app.

- Participants will be instructed not to collect or otherwise provide any personal data while gathering photos and audio narratives about their neighbourhood. Participants will be instructed not to take photographs with identifiable people or any kind of personal information. Researchers will delete or blur data that are inadvertently collected or in any way identifiable.
- All raw data—including de-identified survey data, de-identified photos and audio narratives, workshop notes, and consent forms—will be stored on a password-protected, shared drive on SFU Vault for 5 years after the study ends. Only members of the research team will have the access password.
- Confidentiality is assured in the reporting of research results. Data may be shared in community reports and maps, scientific meetings, presentations in professional settings, scholarly articles, popular media, blog posts, and graduate theses. The information collected will be de-identified and survey data will be aggregated with that of other study participants in all reports. Names will never be revealed in any reporting of results.

Photos, audio narratives, and GPS data about your neighbourhood will be gathered using a smartphone app called the Discovery Tool, which is owned by Stanford University in the United States (US). Data collected using the smartphone app will be uploaded to a secure Stanford server. Under laws in that country, government agencies can look at data stored by host services and internet service providers. However, the information held on the Stanford server will not be connected to anyone's personal identity and will be grouped with the information that other participants collect. The anonymous data are being saved so that researchers can compare Discovery Tool data from communities across the world.

Full confidentiality cannot be maintained in a public or group setting. People may see participants using the smartphone app in the community. We encourage participants not to discuss the content of the workshops to people outside the group; however, we can't control what participants do with the information discussed. Please note that posting to comments sections, liking, or sharing on social media or other forums about this study may identify youth as participants. We therefore suggest that participants refrain from posting comments on social media posts related to the study in order to protect their anonymity.

### **What if someone doesn't want to do this?**

Youth can participate or not. If they decide to participate, they may still choose to stop and have their data removed at any time by emailing the research team, without giving reason. They will still receive compensation for activities they have completed.

### **Who can I talk to about the study?**

If you have any questions about the study, or if you would like to receive copies of the final results and/or published articles of the study, you may contact Dr. Meghan Winters by phone at 604-315-0484, or Meridith Sones at 778-846-4304. If you have any concerns about the rights or experiences of participants in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics, Simon Fraser University, at [jtoward@sfu.ca](mailto:jtoward@sfu.ca) or 778-782-6593.