

Effective Practices in Alternative Education
for the Social Inclusion of Marginalized and Street-Involved Youth:
An Integral Systems Perspective

By

Benjamin J. Geselbracht
B.Sc., University of Victoria, 2004

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ABSTRACT

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This study identifies effective practices in the design of alternative education programs; and more specifically, programs that support the positive social engagement and healthy development of adolescents who have left the public education system and are labeled as marginalized or street involved. Effective practices were identified theoretically through a critic of current educational practices within the North-American public system and through the application of an integral systems theory framework of human development that identifies patterns of relationships between seemingly divergent perspectives in order to achieve the broadest breath of understanding through the inclusion of the truths held within each. A case study of a program that applied these practices within a community agricultural context was then analyzed to test their relevancy in the field. Through an analysis applying qualitative descriptive methodologies the following practices were identified as being effective in supporting positive engagement: 1) an experiential curriculum geared towards developing employable skills, 2) program activities that directly contributed to the local community, 3) the provision of a wage for program participants 4) adults facilitating the program trained in providing supportive caring relationships, 5) program peer groups being composed of youth and young adults of mixed ages and socio-economic backgrounds

with marginalized youth being a minority, 6) a social co-operative organizational structure to administer the program. Limitations of the study were the small number of youth sampled as a result of the nature of the structure of the program in the case study.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth facing challenges in participating in school are at higher risk of substance abuse, mental health problems and anti-social behavior during adolescence and at risk of later marginalization and social exclusion in adulthood (Franke, 2010; Frease, 1973; Hirschi, 1969; Kelly, 1971; Kelly & Balch, 1973; Jang, 1999; Lawrence, 1985; Levin, Belfield, Meunnig, & Rouse, 2007; Mazerolle, 1998; Rhodes & Reiss, 1969; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Smith et. al., 2007a). Marginalization is the process of exclusion from valued social participation. For youth struggling to participate in school, later marginalization in adulthood takes the form of difficulty finding and keeping a job, poverty, substance abuse, poor mental/physical health and involvement in the criminal justice system (Bond et. al, 2007; Bowlby, 2005; Lawrence, 1998; Mehan, 1992).

The purpose of this thesis is to identify effective practices in the design of alternative education programs; and more specifically, programs that support the positive social engagement and healthy development of adolescents who have left the public education system and are labeled as marginalized or street involved. These effective practices will be identified through a theoretical review and case study. The theoretical review will be conducted to generate a set of recommended practices for alternative educational programs. The relevancy of these recommendations will then be tested in a case study of an alternative program offered by a community non-profit youth agency implemented by the author that applied these practices working with youth experiencing marginalization.

In the theoretical review, a socio-historical analysis will be conducted that will analyze some contemporary theories of human development and the educational practices they inform. The brief review will identify current educational practices that are potentially obstructive to the engagement and healthy development of marginalized and street involved youth. Following this analysis, some current research on the educational experience of youth who have left the public education system will then be presented as evidence in support of the critique. This current research, along with the review, will then be used to build an argument for the use of the integral systems theory model of human development as a guiding framework to inform the design of alternative approaches. To conclude the theoretical review, a set of practices for alternative programs will be recommended.

The site for the study is a program called the *Apprenticeship Skills Program* that was delivered by a community youth agency. This pilot program was designed around alternative education practice recommendations informed by integral theory as outlined in the theoretical review of this research. In order to support the positive social integration of youth who were not attending public school and whose life situation could be described as marginalized and/or street involved the program focused on the experiential development of employability skills within an agricultural community context. To analyze the outcomes of the Apprenticeship Skills Program in relation to the utility of the practice recommendations, descriptive qualitative methodologies will be applied with a focus on the perspective of the youth that participated in the program.

For the final discussion, a review of the recommended practices informed by integral theory will be conducted in relation to the experiences of the youth participating within the Apprenticeship Skills Program. This discussion will conclude with a final revised list of effective practices for alternative education programs working with marginalized and street-involved youth that is informed by both theory and application.

PART ONE: THEORETICAL REVIEW

Education and Social Marginalization

As mentioned in the introduction, marginalization is the process of exclusion from valued social participation. School is the most valued form of social participation available to adolescents, and is compulsory up until the age of sixteen in most regions in Canada. In adulthood, work replaces school as the most valued form of social participation. Around 10% of youth from each age cohort become separated from the regular education stream, and eventually do not graduate in Canada (Bowlby, 2005; Bowlby and McMullen, 2002). This same group experience twice the rate of unemployment than those who graduate successfully, and the evidence is clear that potential employers avoid hiring “drop-outs”(Gilmore, 2010). In addition, in a study examining the cost of dropping out of high school, Hankivsky (2008) concludes that, “failure to complete a high school education carries with it astounding economic costs to individuals and the state (Hankivsky, 2008, p.67).” Hankivsky (2008) uses the following quote to explain this phenomenon, “As Levin et al. observe: ‘An individual’s educational attainment is one of the most important determinants of their life chances in terms of employment, income, health status, housing and many other amenities (Levin, Belfield, Meunnig, & Rouse, 2007, p.2, quoted in Hankivsky, 2008)’ ”.

Many youth facing difficulties in participating in school live in poverty, deal with high levels of family stress, family disruption, physical and sexual abuse, unstable and changing living conditions, and care-givers struggling with addictions and mental health problems (Axinn, Duncan, & Thorton, 1997; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Haveman,

Wolfe, & Wilson, 1997; Peters & Mullis, 1997; Roos et. al. 2006; Smith, 2007a; Smith et. al., 2007b; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997). There is a very clear socio-economic link between the experience of poverty as a child, instability in the family, poor school participation, and poverty in adulthood (Brownell et al., 2004; Roos et. al. 2006). This has been referred to as the poverty cycle (Corak, 2006).

The statistical association between not completing high school, social marginalization and the large social costs associated has provided a substantial amount of political will to increase high school graduation rates as part of the solution to this inequity. Starting in the 1960's, alternative education programs were introduced in British Columbia to assist youth struggling in the mainstream school setting (Smith et. al, 2007a). Today, nearly every school district has a variety of alternative streams.

The success of alternative education is mixed (Cox, Davidson & Bynum, 1995). Highschool graduation rates have doubled over the last thirty years within BC and Canada (Bowlby, 2005) however, 10% of youth are still not graduating (Bowlby 2005; Gilmore, 2010). It is also difficult to tell if the increase in graduation rates has translated into an improvement in the employability and life situation of youth caught living in marginalized conditions. Despite the doubling of graduation rates over the last thirty years, in this same period of time, the proportion of individuals in Canada living in conditions of poverty has remained unchanged (Michalos, 2011). It is worthwhile to investigate more closely the population of youth who are not participating in the public education system and dealing with challenging living conditions, in order to understand more clearly their needs for the purpose of designing alternative educational programs

that can more effectively improve their chances of becoming contributing members within a more inclusive society.

Marginalized and Street-involved Youth

The term “marginalized” is used to describe youth that have experienced social exclusion as result of abuse, sexual exploitation, substance use, bullying, discrimination, mental health problems or street involvement (Smith, Saewyc, Albert & Mackay, 2007b). The term "street involved"¹ is used to describe youth affiliated with street culture and/or economy and is inclusive of those who are homeless and actively living on the streets (Chambers, 2007, p.18). There is a wide diversity among street involved youth (Frankish, Hwang & Quantz, 2005); however, there are also similar lifestyle characteristics that this group more commonly share including: poverty, unstable living environment, selling or using drugs, involvement in the sex trade and engaging in criminal activities (Smith et al., 2007b).

Marginalized and street involved youth exist over a spectrum of risk in terms of harm to their well-being and further exclusion from society. The more these youth become dissociated from their families, the education system, and the labour market, the more their risk increases through the accumulation of barriers such as further abuse, unstable housing, mental health problems, pregnancy and criminal involvement (Smith, et al., 2007b). These youth face an increased risk of a wide spectrum of health problems including: depression, suicide, trauma from physical and sexual assault, blood borne and sexually transmitted infections, addictions and overdose (Boivin, Roy, Haley & Fort,

¹ Street involvement has otherwise been referred to as “delinquency” (Gaetz, 2004).

2005; Marshall, Kerr & Shoveller, 2009; Smith et al., 2007b). The mortality rate among street involved youth is 12 times higher than that of any other young people their age with suicide and drug and/or alcohol problems the leading causes of death (Haley and Roy, 1999; Roy et. al., 1998).

Many youth who are vulnerable to increasing chances of harm and exclusion share commonalities in their earlier childhood experiences. These experiences include: physical and sexual abuse, mental health problems, violence, families with substance abuse problems, and uncertainty about living situations due to transient families, changing foster homes, or running away from home (Saewyc, Wang & Chittenden, 2006). All of these experiences are much more prevalent in families with incomes under the poverty line who are challenged by meeting basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

The impact of these experiences on children are: emotional and mental health issues resulting from the trauma of abuse (Haley and Roy, 1999); difficulty creating supportive relationships with adults in a care-giving role as a result of their previous unpredictable care givers; and difficulty staying connected with supportive adults and peer groups because of frequent moves. It has been suggested that the lifestyle and behaviors that result from these childhood experiences, along with the direct effects of poverty, are not properly accounted for by the public education system. This leaves the youth unsupported and in many cases in a conflict with the school system, all of which leads them on a trajectory of further social marginalization (Gaetz, 2004).

Developmental Psychology and Post-Structuralist Approaches

The field of developmental psychology as a scientific discipline informs and legitimizes the design of many educational and administrative practices within the public educational system, including those concerning the engagement of marginalized youth within alternative programs (Billington, 1996; Burman, 2008; Gatto, 2009). A major critique of developmental psychology has been that its approaches do not adequately account for the socio-cultural context from which observations and universalized conclusions are made about child and adolescent development (Burman, 2008; Kurtines, Azmitia & Gewirtz, 1992). In this way approaches designed from this perspective to support the educational engagement of marginalized youth may not adequately take into account all the necessary factors of their circumstances, thus limiting their ultimate effectiveness. It is important to understand these limitations and how they originate, in order to avoid replicating them in the process of developing other more effective alternatives.

The dominant approaches of developmental psychology focus on changing behavior by applying techniques to the individual to help them attain a normative standard (Burman, 2008, Kurtines et. al., 1992). Within developmental psychology careful cross-sectional and longitudinal observations are made to inform normative developmental progressions of a youth's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional capacities towards an endpoint of a rational, emotionally controlled adult (Burman, 2008; Kurtines et. al., 1992). These normative progressions are used to inform practices of classroom age and achievement grading to assess how an individual is progressing in relation to their peers (Burman, 2008, Gatto, 2009). For youth who are not achieving an

acceptable range of cognitive ability, or who cannot behave according to the classroom age appropriate expectations of self-control, some form of intervention is usually provided. In many cases this assistance is provided outside of the regular classroom to address the perceived difficulties in either the youth's cognitive or socio-emotional development, which are related respectively to their academic performance and self-control. When norms of age appropriate classroom behavior are not being met, it is the behavior modifying techniques developed with the field of developmental psychology such as cognitive behavioral therapy, psychotherapy or simply medication that are most often employed. The focus of this assistance is most often towards supporting youth in improving their academic achievement and social skills towards re-integration with the regular stream of youth and successful high-school completion (Smith, Peled, Albert, & Mackay, 2007a).

One of the main critiques of developmental psychology is that its empirical objectivist methodologies do not adequately account for the socio-cultural context from which its observations and universalized conclusions are made (Burman, 2008; Kurtines et. al., 1992). These methodologies emphasize and isolate the individual as the object of study interpreting behavior as arising solely out of intrinsic factors within the psychology of the individual. This focus on the individual isolated from their context leads to the institutionalized social practices that the individual interacts and develops within, often going unnoticed and taken for granted as a causal source for problematic behaviour (Billington, 1996; Burman, 2008).

In this way the causal source of problematic behaviors are often located within the individual rather than the individual's relationship with the human designed practices and structures. This leads to interventions that try to change their problematic behavior, which as a technique, sometimes risks becoming overly focused on adjusting the psychology of the individual and not addressing the overall ill-informed institutional practices that the individual is a part of. For example, to solve the persistent disruptive behaviors of youth in a classroom, the problem is often framed as a pathology caused by the individual's psychological makeup or perhaps caused by a "dysfunctional family." Youth are then given such labels as "oppositional defiance disorder," "attention deficit disorder", "attachment disorder", "mood disorder" etc., and therapeutic techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy, counselling, or simply medication are employed to return the youth to normative behavior. Meanwhile, the elements and practices of the classroom environment are overlooked and rarely questioned as a contributing yet changeable factor.

Although with an age cohort slightly younger than the focus of this research, an excellent example to illustrate the effect of overlooked institutional practices is the finding that children between the ages of 6 and 12 born in December are 39 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and 48 per cent more likely to be given medication as treatment compared to their peers born in January of the same year (Morrow, Garland, Wright, & Maclure, 2012). With schools being the frontlines of ADHD diagnosis, teachers are often the first people to identify students who are struggling. Morrow et. al., (2012) suggests that the inability to concentrate in class is being wrongly located within the child as a psychological disorder,

rather than the child's age, which is younger in relation to the rest of the class. Therefore, ADHD diagnoses are often wrongly attributed to a narrow definition of behavior, and the broader context of the child's behavior is being overlooked. It is well accepted that there exists enough variation in the rates of socio-emotional and mental development of children and early adolescence where even six months can make a big difference in cognitive and emotional ability (Bee & Boyd, 2006; Brooks-Gunn, Petersen, & Eichon, 1985). The social practices of grouping children together by the calendar year they were born in and comparing their ability to the same normative standard with others in the same year cohort places these children that are simply younger and less mature at risk of unnecessarily being singled out from their peers, labeled with a disorder, and given medication. These interventions may seem necessary within a school system that requires teachers, who are often overloaded with multiple responsibilities for health and well-being, to base their practice on teaching and assessing children within the same grade level based on complex provincially mandated curriculae. However, what Morrow et. al.'s (2012) study is a clear example of is that some practices within the school system that lead to the development of interventions into the behaviour of children and youth may be adding another layer of interference to these youth's healthy development because the impacts of taken for granted institutionalized practices, such as comparing the ability of individuals born in the same calendar year, are overlooked.

Post-structural theorists put forth the argument that problematic behaviors of individuals are often caused by the inability of a culture to align its institutional practices with its individual members (Burman, 2008). Although this perspective is very important in developing effective alternative practices, identifying taken for granted

social practices that may not be serving the community can be very challenging. This is because of the depth by which these practices have become accepted by society as a result of their origins and purpose being long forgotten and the effects of their perpetual presence fading from conscious acknowledgment. This is much like the old saying “a fish in water doesn’t recognize that it’s wet.” A useful approach taken by post-structural theorists to bring these potentially problematic practices and their underlying assumptions and beliefs into awareness is through a reflective deconstructive process that first makes explicit deeply held cultural assumptions and then locates them historically within the socio-political context from within which they emerged (Burman, 2008). This process allows for these beliefs and practices to be critically assessed in terms of their relevancy today and the degree by which they serve the interests of the individuals they are meant to serve. It is important to analyze the experience of marginalized youth from this socio-historical context in order to identify taken for granted educational practices that may be ineffective in the educational engagement of these youth in order to avoid repeating them in the design of alternatives.

Socio-historical Analysis of Educational Practices within the Public Education

System

Many of the foundational observations of developmental psychology that inform the design of our public education system were made during the 19th and early 20th century, within the socio-cultural context of the enlightenment’s beliefs about mind and the social practices of industrial capitalism (Gatto, 2009). As most famously outlined by the influential Descartes; mind was understood to be rational, individual, and separate from the body, and was the defining feature that set man apart from animal (Burman,

2008). From an enlightenment perspective, all social processes should be modeled from the full expression of humanity, with the individuals most worthy of full participation being those capable of acting with a rational autonomy, able to understand the world objectively, and free from the interference of bodily emotions (Burman, 2008; Kurtines et al., 1992). Industrial capitalism, informed by these underlying assumptions, organized the North American economy through rational principles of efficiency, championed wage labor in all sectors, and applied the widespread use of factory production (Katz, 1981). The perspectives of those most capable in operating within this system, the wealthy, had the most influence in informing the design and implementation of further socially institutionalized practices (Katz, 1981; Gatto, 2009; Prentice, 2004).

The creation of the concept of the life stage of adolescence and the emergence of high-school education are instructive examples of how the values of those in control of institution building can be taken up and turned into scientifically legitimized theories that further reinforce sometimes problematic ways of understanding youth and how they should be engaged. Adolescence is understood as a critical time in the development of a person's identity, their emotional and psychological independence, their understanding of health, and their *future role* in communities (UNICEF, 2002). Adolescence has been depicted as a time of emotional turmoil and experimentation, where alienation and the inability to connect meaningfully with other people is a common experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The concept of adolescence was first introduced in a two volume study published in 1904 by the German trained behavioral psychologist G Stanley Hall (Gatto, 2009). Hall identified adolescence as an irrational state of human

growth where potentially dangerous behaviors required psychological controls best instituted through schooling (Hall, 1904).

Hall's observations of youth between the ages of 13-18 came at a time of incredible social transformation in North America. Over the late 18th and early 19th century, the first phase of capitalist development had introduced waged labour in all economic forums, which led to the demise of a prolonged, highly regulated apprenticeship, that most youth, not working on farms, had previously been introduced to around the ages of 14-16 years (Katz, 1975; Moogk, 1982). In addition, the creation of factories led to an incredible burst of urbanization, with new immigrants and rural families flooding to the cities to find work (Katz, 1981). This led to what Katz (1975) called "the crisis of youth in the nineteenth-century city," where their labor, unlike on the farm or in an apprenticeship, was scarcely more necessary than that of adolescents today (Katz, 1976, p. 392).

Without anything socially sanctioned to engage in, these youth remained in an unwilling state of idleness, excluded from valued social participation with little direction. In his study of mid-19th century Hamilton, Katz (1975) found that over half of the youth between the ages of 13 and 14 were neither in work nor at school with little evidence of how they spent their time other than socializing amongst themselves in the streets and in many cases were quite impoverished (Katz, 1975). These social conditions were shared among the majority of emerging urban centers (Katz, 1976). Exclusion from valued social participation in both the labor force and the urban home resulted in a decrease in the time these youth spent directly socializing and receiving guidance from more

experienced adults. This decrease was also followed by an increase in time they spent socializing in large isolated groups amongst themselves, trying to find ways to entertain themselves and meet their living needs with the resources available. Through the individualizing lens of developmental psychology, the perceived irrationality and disruptiveness expressed by these youth was attributed and fixed as something that existed as a process within them, simply part of their nature as a stage in the normal course of human development (Fasick, 1994).

Hall's (1904) observations increased the anxieties of those in a growing position of power to make change, namely the growing middle class. Increased immigration, urbanization and industrialization lead to concerns of urban crime and poverty, increasing cultural heterogeneity, the necessity to train a disciplined urban industrial workforce, and an anxiety to ensure good jobs for their children (Dunn, 1980; Katz, 1975; Prentice, 2004). The extension of public education into the teen years appeared to be a reasonable solution to these growing concerns, where social ills could be addressed and contained through socialization within a controlled environment and youth could be prepared for their eventual participation in the larger society (Prentice, 2004). In this manner the concerns of middle class families informed the emerging model of the high-school that eventually became compulsory all over the continent (Dunn, 1980; Katz, 1976; Prentice, 2004).

The influence of the processes of industrial production of scale along with middle class family values played a formative role in the basic design of high-schools (Katz, 1976; Prentice, 2004). Following economic successes from the designs found within

methods of industrial production of scale, big centralized buildings able to house large numbers of youth appeared, bells announced when students were to sit down and pay attention and when to rest; school rules enforced an industrial work ethic, such as arriving on time and completing work as required and corporal punishment instituted for those that could not follow classroom expectations (Katz, 1976; Prentice, 2004). The socialization of these routines fit well with prevailing middle class values of a well organized home lead by a sober Christian patriarch where the mother and youth were guided by the father's authority (Chunn, 1982).

Industrial processes and patriarchal authority also influenced instructional methods and perceptions of the learning process as conveyed in this quote by an influential Stanford Education professor whose administrative methodologies played a large role in the design of the modern Canadian system, especially that of British Columbia (Broom, 2007).

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life...and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down. This demands good tools, specialized machinery, continuous measurement of production to see it is according to specifications, the elimination of waste in manufacture, and a large variety in the output. (quoted in Kliebard, 1992, p. 116)

This objectification of youth as something to be shaped and modeled by the specifications of society reflects a more teacher centered approach to learning where youth are educated

and molded through a prescribed curriculum developed by experts. This objectification is also paralleled by many of the approaches within developmental psychology with its interventions when a product does not come out to specification. The peak of this growing perception of education as an industrial process has been called the social efficiency movement of the early 20th century (Dunn, 1980). This movement is depicted by the greater reliance on age grading, and performance tracking through standardized testing and competency grading to ensure that all youth were efficiently processed and ready for their proper social fit (Broom, 2007).

This top down authoritative industrial approach is reflected in the governance structure by which the Canadian Educational system is administered (Katz, 1981). The Canadian governance structure that exists within each province is that of an incipient bureaucracy, and is the hierarchical and centralized type of administration where decisions of the design of curriculum and teacher education are made by a small group of experts and implemented down a long chain of command to the actual classroom (Katz, 1981). This model was created in Prussia in the early 19th century in response to the need to train on a large scale a more obedient and disciplined army of soldiers that could efficiently follow orders in the wake of humiliating losses to the French (Gatto, 2009). This administrative technique proved extremely effective in its ability to quickly organize a large number of youth according to a prescribed plan, and impressive results in the improvement of Prussia's military prowess was witnessed, not to mention an incredible increase in industrial productivity (Katz, 1987). These two outcomes did not go unnoticed by U.S industrialists, who made up a strong political lobby in Massachusetts, where an intense debate for what administrative system would be employed in the first

public education system in North America (Katz, 1987). Those supporting localized democracy as an administration form where local School boards would retain the power to determine curriculum, teacher training, and decision making for the majority of the elements within their school, argued that the large bureaucratic means of organizing education were inherently un-democratic and would limit a community's ability to respond effectively to the unique educational needs of their youth (Katz, 1987). The decision to go with an incipient bureaucracy where a minister in liaison with experts from the university would set curriculum, educational policy, and teacher training was won by an extremely narrow margin (Katz, 1987; Gatto, 2009). This model was established in Massachusetts and set the track for the rest of the continent, and eventually, became the model chosen for Canada by admirers of American progress (Prentice, 2004).

Democratically elected school boards that had their origins in pre-institutional grass-roots educational movements in communities did continue to persist in the administrative practices of the public education system although with greatly reduced powers that continue to diminish even till present day (Flemming & Hutton, 1997). The effect of a large bureaucratic governance structure created an ever increasing distancing between the perspectives of local communities and the control they had over the manner their youth were being educated. This omission of voices in the design of the public education system resulted in a curriculum, instruction and administration that reflected less and less the unique needs of each community and their youth (Katz, 1987; Gatto, 2009).

Despite the heavy reliance on industrial routines, the governance structure of the educational system lead to the development of a specific curriculum of instruction that was more influenced by the middle class experiences of the experts in charge, many of

who were from the growing fields of education and developmental psychology (Broom, 2007; Prentice, 2004). Moreover, the curriculum prepared youth for prestigious professional careers such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and professors, which was very important for social mobility and the maintenance of status among the middle class. Thus, these achievement-oriented values lead to the more preparatory academic disciplines being given much greater value within the high school (Prentice, 2004). At their very core, the more abstracted learning of the academic disciplines, which reflected the learning environments of the designing experts, was influenced by the foundational enlightenment beliefs and values; the separateness of the mind and the body and the understanding that the development of the mind as being the primary objective of human development (Kurtines et. al., 1992). These values and beliefs oriented curriculum and instructional methods towards a particular segment of the population with little attention paid to more practical and applied pursuits (Prentice, 2004). Although more applied vocational studies did exist, the greatest social value was placed on the academic disciplines, with teachers within these disciplines given the most prestige, and accomplished students the greatest privileges and recognition through scaled grading (Gatto, 2009; Prentice, 2004). This focus on individual accomplishment fit well with capitalistic orientations reinforced by the contemporary understanding of evolutionary processes; Darwin's survival of the fittest (Burman, 2008). Those not able to achieve the required course grades were adjusted into other streams geared towards less educationally esteemed pursuits. In this way, the grading process directly presented each youth with a continuous middle class measurement of their social worth in a system designed in the image of its middle class creators.

The abstracted nature of the high-school curriculum did not go unnoticed during its formative years, since many farmers and working people could not discern its immediate advantages since few skills were being taught that seemed likely to improve their situation. As a superintendent in Guelph hinted at the turn of the 19th century, “much of the curriculum seemed irrelevant or unnecessary to those engaged in the business of making a living (Prentice, 2004, pg.117)”. In addition, working class voters often objected to high-schools, because the socialized cost of secondary education provided a disproportionate advantage to middle class families for whom it was clear they were designed to serve (Katz, 1987).

The majority of high-schools today still maintain the same foundational educational practices as they did 80 to 120 years ago, that is, designed in accordance to promote 19th century middle class values of obedience to authority and individual academic achievement (Katz, 1987; Prentice, 2004; Gatto, 2009). These basic educational practices that reflect industrial routines and the privileging of academic pursuits are: large classrooms of same aged peers(age-grading); teacher centered delivery of a prescribed curriculum; authoritarian (expert driven/teacher centered) methods of instruction and discipline; individual competency grading (normalization to a bell curve), and the privileging of academic skill sets (learning about subjects through reading, writing and lecturing as opposed to direct engagement in them). The only real significant changes to high schools over this period has been the replacement of corporal punishment to correct poor behavior with the more elaborate interventions developed within the field of developmental psychology that accompany basic techniques of segregation and dismissal (Burman, 2008). In total, these practices reflect values and social anxieties of

the growing middle class during the industrialization of North America and are the context that is often taken for granted within which the behavior of youth have been observed, normalized and translated by developmental psychology into expectations of healthy development for youth today.

Problematic Practices

The issue with these educational practices is that they were designed through the lens of the middle class perspective of the experts who first introduced them. This perspective is at risk of over-generalizing the appropriateness of these educational practices to groups living outside middle class norms because of a lack of inclusion in the design process of the perspectives of families and youth that come from backgrounds that do not share the same financial resources and family structure. The consequence is that effects of these practices may not serve, and in fact are in conflict, with the values, needs and strategies of youth coming from non-middle class backgrounds. Social reproduction and resistance theorists suggest that these conflicts of values lead to experiences of alienation for marginalized youth because the educational practices do not fit the manner in which the particular group needs support (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 1983; Liazos, 1978; Schwartz, 1989). This is much like a left hander being forced to cut with scissors designed by the perspective of the dominant right hand majority; the process is more likely to be frustrating, messy and lead to an undesired outcome. These theorists suggest that these alienating experiences set marginalized youth on a trajectory for further social exclusion, increasing the likelihood of their involvement in street culture and perpetuating the cycle of poverty into another generation (Smith, 2000).

There is a well-established inverse correlation between participation in the public education system and increased social marginalization and street involvement (Smith, 2000). This association is relatively unaffected by background characteristics such as class, race and gender (Bowditch 1993; Smith, 2000). This association suggests a causal relationship but says little about the directionality in terms of what causes what. For example, do school experiences help keep marginalized youth from increased street involvement or, as social reproduction and resistance theorists suggest, do the school experiences of marginalized youth in fact lead to street involvement (Lawrence, 1998)? This makes the interpretations of interacting subjects a crucial source of information because how someone will engage with a certain intervention or experience depends not only on the intervention, but also on how that individual interprets the intervention. Following this argument, Smith (2000) suggests qualitative studies that investigate how marginalized youth perceive their experiences in school are essential for identifying educational practices that may support or inhibit their educational engagement and social inclusion.

Studies investigating the school experiences of marginalized youth that have left the public education system support how the lack of consideration of their life experiences in the design of certain educational practices leads to a conflict of values. This can result in alienation and exclusion (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore, & Friant, 2010; Shulz & Rubel, 2011; Smith, 2007a). At the most basic level the experiences of youth living in poverty today and in the past differ from the experiences of 19th century middle class youth in the immediacy of securing basic needs such as food,

clothing and shelter and the stability of the home environment. These differences set an earlier maturation for youth living in conditions of poverty in terms of having to fend for themselves and be economically self-sufficient, even contributing members of their family. These demands provide a whole set of different and more immediate values and needs through which these youth interpret their school experience and which command the priorities of their attention. These realities are not often supported in high schools with many youth leaving school or missing school to work and make money (Smith, 2007a). Many youth in poverty who do not have alternative options, and are distracted by hunger or insecurity due to their lack of clothing compared to their peers, end up being distracted in class which leads them to achieve poorly in academics (Smith, 2007a). In British Columbia, more than one in five youth (22%) who left school and later returned to an alternative education program, reported going hungry because they or their parents did not have enough money to buy food, and 11% of youth reported this happening at least once a week. Among those who reported going hungry, almost half (48%) went hungry once a week or more (Smith, 2007a).

The experiences of youth who have grown up with abuse, neglect, and unstable family structures, with family members who act unreasonably and unpredictably, experience a greater intensity and frequency of difficult and distracting emotions than do youth not dealing with these conditions (Eckenrode, 1993; Ford, Rascusin, & Davis, 1999; Shields, 1994). Much like hunger, difficult emotions that arise as a result of these experiences such as confusion, frustration, anxiety, fear, depression, anger and feelings of powerlessness do not disappear when the bell rings and are major obstacles in focusing at school and engaging in academic study (Barnett, 1997; Lipschitz et al., 2000; Schwab-

Stone, 1995). A third of youth in alternative education programs in British Columbia say they left school because of family problems (Smith et. al., 2007a). School courses are rarely available to help teach these youth how to deal with these challenges and the time necessary to address them in counselling takes away from academic study. In this way, youth dealing with these situations are not taught or provided the space to address and build skills to cope with what is troubling them and when they do, they fall behind in course work risking separation from their peers. In this way, the needs and values of marginalized youth to address destabilizing forces within their living situation, is positioned against the school's need for academic achievement. These considerations along with the need to address more immediate physical and economic concerns, suggests that the academic curriculum in high-schools lacks an immediate relevancy to many marginalized youth.

In addition, youth, who as children, had to adapt to living with unpredictable, unreasonable or violent family members have to take control of their own safety at a much younger age since any encounter could potentially have serious physical and emotional consequences. This is in time life when these youth have much less emotional and mental resources compared to an adult. This difficulty of trusting others to act in their best interests increases these youth's likelihood to act autonomously to control situations they are threatened by in whatever manner they have learned (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Ford et. al., 1999; Shields, 1994). The consequence is that these youth are more likely to come into conflict with other youth and will react to discipline and direction with more extreme behaviors like withdrawal or aggression that are not classroom acceptable (Eckenrode et. al, 1993; Shield, 1994). In crowded school

environments where 30 students to a teacher and packed hallways are normal conditions, student conflict and authoritarian means of relating by administrators is almost unavoidable. In these conditions, very understandably forceful or avoidant reactions of these youth given their home environment can be misinterpreted, taken personally and persecuted by teachers whom expect polite, obedient submissive behavior (Eckenrode et al., 1993). Marginalized youth that have left school report the perception that teachers had the authority to both empower and humiliate them (Shulz & Rubel, 2011). These youth all reported that a difficult relationship with one school adult was one of the most predominant factors in the youth's decision to leave school or having been expelled. These youth expressed emotions of rejection, inferiority, humiliation and resentment towards these adults and felt that they had been unjustly treated and abandoned by these teacher's reactions (Shulz & Rubel, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, marginalized youth can be alienated by the practice of competency grading, which can be a factor in causing social exclusion from peers, self-esteem issues, and a negative sense of self-worth. For youth struggling to achieve academically and maintain focus in the classroom because of difficult experiences outside of school, the constant labeling of their poor performance through graded assignments, report cards and segregation from peers can be experienced as very demeaning (Shulz & Rubel, 2011). In their study investigating the experiences of youth who did not complete highschool, Shulz & Rubel (2011) reported that referrals to classes or programs for "at-risk" youth came with a great degree of humiliation and shame for these youth and increased their animosity and disengagement. Graded as "un-satisfactory" and physically separated from the more satisfactory, these youth were more likely to respond to their

insecurity, distrust and growing fear of failure in school by aligning themselves with peers in the same situation. This is because these youth in the same situation would allow them more easy access through an acceptance gained by exhibiting the same frustrated attitudes and behaviors shared against the school (Shulz & Rubel, 2011). All students in the study acknowledged that peer pressure was a significant force regarding the decisions they made about how much time and attention was paid to academics; however, they also believed the consequences of choosing social acceptance and belonging over academic progress was the less hurtful of the two options (Shulz & Rubel, 2011).

When schools label certain youths as deviant or delinquent, these labels become internalized, where the youth in turn act out the assigned label (Gaetz, 2004; Hargreaves, 1967; Lemert, 1972; Rist, 1977; Schafer et al. 1974; Stinchombe, 1964). In this way labeling and segregation of marginalized youth based on unsatisfactory performance makes it more likely for these youth to begin actively rejecting the “middle class measuring rod” with which they are being evaluated in order to preserve their status, ego and self-esteem associated with identity (Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977). It is suggested that this resistance helps to produce school failure and further social exclusion as these youth increasingly identify with the norms and behaviors of the groups they find themselves within and recognized as belonging to by peers and adults (Davies, 2000; Giroux, 1983). In this way segregating youth struggling academically and behaviorally into groups, places in conflict the value these youth put on feeling accepted and belonging with the narrow options and criteria for acceptance provided by the school, namely, academic achievement.

The conflict of values resulting from the practices of age grading and segregating youth struggling in school into groups (competency grading) sets these youth on a trajectory of further marginalization that is cumulative and self-reinforcing (Gaetz, 2004). For example, as youth distracted in class because of underlying socio-economic problems or other experiences of marginalization are grouped together, these distractions become multiplied as numerous distracted youth distract one another. These youth who are all not succeeding in school begin reinforcing one another's resistance and identification with the attitudes and behaviors that identifies their group. These youth are more likely to live in contexts with less social support and in situations that are more likely to compromise their health, safety and opportunity (Gaetz, 2004). Relationships will naturally be created between these youth and, although positive support can be generated, as youth associate more with others from more challenging circumstances the likelihood of exposure to these circumstances and the risk associated to them increases along with identification with the norms of behavior adapted to living within those more challenging circumstances (Gaetz, 2004). Exposure leads to more difficulty participating in school, through increased drug use, involvement in criminal activity, and lack of adults and peers that are able to support school attendance and the discipline necessary to complete assigned work. These factors severely complicate further school engagement because they necessitate more specialized considerations to support these youth. As these youth become more excluded from daily participation in school, alternatives for socially valued participation become scarce (if any at all given compulsory school laws) and the only other options are rehabilitation programs geared towards re-integration within the school system (Smith et. al., 2007a). This lack of supported alternatives increases the chances of engaging in street culture.

Street culture acts as an intensification of this trajectory, and carries with it an even greater increased risk of exposure to compromising situations and activities. In particular, if youth are dependent on the street economy, street involvement increases the likelihood of either engaging in criminal activity or being victims of crime (Gaetz, 2004). This, in turn, increases the chance of further segregation into like groups either in treatment centers or corrections facilities. This segregation, despite its benefits, can further reinforce an interpretation of being different from mainstream society, reinforce relationships with more anti-social networks, and in some cases entrench marginalization through a change in legal status.

Alternative Education

As previously mentioned, for many marginalized and street-involved youth, the basic educational practices of an abstract academically focused curriculum, large age graded classrooms, authoritarian discipline, and competency grading (segregation of youth struggling to achieve the standard) may be in conflict with supporting their more immediate needs and values. These needs and values include basic living needs such as food, clothing and in many cases shelter; needs and values associated with stability and safety stemming from living within a difficult home environment; and needs and strategies for acceptance, belonging and esteem necessary for the maintenance and development of identity. Many of these challenges have been acknowledged by educators and policy makers and alternative education programs in BC have been developed to:

Focus on the educational, social and emotional issues for those students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program. An alternate education program provides its support through differentiated instruction, program delivery and enhanced counseling services based on student need. (BC Ministry of Education, 2012)

These alternative programs are provided in multiple contexts either as separate classrooms within a high school, an entirely separate alternative school, or programs run by community agencies working in collaboration with the public education system (Smith et. al., 2007a). These programs adjust traditional educational practices through offering a broader range of educational, emotional and practical support. This is accomplished through lower teacher to student ratios, youth care workers that can support youth in addressing emotional needs through therapeutic support, a self-paced curriculum and flexible attendance requirements (Smith et. al., 2007a).

The degree of school connectedness a youth feels has been demonstrated as a strong predictive factor of positive educational engagement, well-being and healthy transition into adulthood (Bisset et. al., 2007; Bond et al., 2007; Hawkins et. al., 2005; Lonczak et al., 2002; Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Resnick et al. 1997; Rowe and Stewart, 2009; Rutter et. al, 1979; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Youngblade et. al., 2007). School connectedness includes elements such as positive relationships with teachers and peers, feelings of safety, and a sense of belonging at school (Bond et. al., 2007; Rowe and Stewart, 2009). As a central characteristic in achieving positive engagement, especially

in alternative programs, a sense of school connectedness has been increasingly recognized as an important element to promote (Bond et. al. 2007; Carter et. al. 2007; Rowe & Steward, 2009). School connectedness, although widely accepted as important, is still poorly understood in terms of how to promote it (Rowe & Steward, 2009).

Although many practices promoted within BC alternative education programs contribute to achieving a sense of school connectedness for marginalized and street-involved youth, there are still many gaps in securing their engagement. Not adequately taken into consideration, as articulated above, are many marginalized youth's immediate basic living needs and their sense of not belonging resulting from prior experiences of exclusion and segregation (Shulz & Rubel, 2011; Smith et. al., 2007a). Alternative education programs in B.C. may still be limited by traditional educational practices in achieving a sense of connectedness and engagement, because some of these practices set up a conflict of values which leads to a sense of alienation, the opposite of connectedness.

The two most notable of these practices are a central focus on achievement in completing an abstracted academic curriculum and segregation into isolated groups of youth struggling to achieve in the classroom environment (competency grading). Firstly an abstracted curriculum does not support these youth with securing basic living needs and the education required to reliably participate in even the most basic of jobs. In surveys completed by youth within alternative education programs within B.C, almost half reported a greater need for job training and work experience to address their lack of access to financial resources (Smith et. al., 2007a). Secondly, the segregation of youth who are not able to achieve in the regular classroom environment whom are more likely

to come from similar life circumstances may create and exacerbate an identity of exclusion from valued social participation. An identity of exclusion is perpetuated because of the value these youth place on belonging and the self-reinforcing trajectory of social marginalization (Gaetz 2004; Shulz & Rubel, 2011). This follows Cox's (1995) earlier mentioned meta-research analysis of alternative programs across North America that found that despite increasing rates of high-school completion, many alternative education programs do little to reduce the likelihood of further social exclusion such as involvement in street culture and criminal activity (Cox, 1995).

From the socio-historical analysis and research into the school experiences of marginalized youth, it is reasonable to suggest that educational practices such as age grading, competency grading to a normalized standard, curriculum emphasis on learning academic skill sets and authoritarian/teacher centered means of instruction and discipline come into conflict with the needs and values of marginalized and street-involved youth. This conflict originates as a result of the exclusion of the perspective of marginalized groups in the design of practices within the current educational system because of a historical over-privileging of the middle class perspective used to inform these practices. The result of the conflict between these educational practices and the needs and values of marginalized and street involved youth can contribute to sending this group on a trajectory of further social marginalization. In order to help guide the design of more effective educational practices, a broader more inclusive understanding is needed that can make sense of the complex interrelationships between the needs and values of marginalized and street-involved youth and the social contexts they operate within so as to avoid unnecessary conflicts of values that can inhibit the social inclusion of this group.

Integral Systems Theory

Integral systems theory is a framework of human and social development that may be a useful guidepost to inform the design of alternative educational practices effective in securing the positive engagement of marginalized and street-involved youth. Integral theory draws awareness to key aspects of human experience that need to be intentionally accounted for in order to avoid conflicts of values between those informing educational practices and the values of the marginalized and street involved youth they are meant to serve. An integral framework of development is informed by an approach that sees all perspectives as containing truths whose only weaknesses are that they are simply incomplete and thus have a tendency to over-extend themselves into contexts that may not apply (Wilber, 1994). In this way integral systems theory is an evolving framework said to be integral-aperspectival, meaning not privileging any one perspective over another, but integral in that it continually seeks to find how the truths of all perspectives can be honored through seeking how they relate to all others in the ever expanding totality of human experience (Wilber, 1994).

Through this process of investigation many underlying patterns that connect diverse perspectives from eastern, western and traditional philosophies and across all disciplines of the sciences and humanities have been identified that have given rise to an emerging framework from which to understand human nature and development (Wilber, 2000). For the purposes of this exploration, an integral systems theory framework takes the observations made from the field of developmental psychology and integrates them with the observations made by post-structural theorists. Thus, the perspective of

developmental psychology about innate developmental stages and the internal locus of individual agency, is integrated with the perspective of post-structuralism that recognizes how human interpretation and thus agency is socially constructed and exists more in between the individual and the context of the cultural values, beliefs and practices they grow up interacting within. As argued earlier, the vast amount of observation and understanding derived within the field of developmental psychology about how individuals respond to their environment through their psychological processes can lead to an over focus on interventions at the level of the individual when the broader social context is over-looked. However, when these understandings are integrated with the consideration that many aspects of those psychological responses are in part generated through a constructive process with a multi-layered social context, the observations of developmental psychology can be mobilized to not only identify aspects of the social context that are problematic but also, potentially identify transformations to the structural elements of this social context that could be potential solutions. In this way, through this integration some central principles and processes can be identified that fit with the above qualitative research findings of the school experience of marginalized youth, and thus might be a theoretical orientation broad enough in its ability to account for the spectrum of factors necessary to guide the design of effective and inclusive alternative educational environments.

Layers of being

A central concept within integral systems theory that weaves together many perspectives is the understanding of humans as compound individuals, constructed by successively overlapping layers of being (Wilber, 1983). The layers that compose an

individual from the most foundational to the most complex are the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (Wilber, 1983). Each layer is associated with a set of capacities for relating to the world with each layer arising through, including, and expanding upon the expression of the capacities of the more foundational layers. For example, the capacity of the physical self for perception, to receive information from the environment through sense organs, gives rise to the emotional capacities to respond to this information in a sustained and directed manner. The ability to respond is supported by emotions through the subjective experiences of self-centered urges, drives and desires which also coordinate action with other emotional beings through the reciprocation of *feelings* (Wilber, 2000). The mental capacities, which are dependent on these felt internal drives to direct attention, allow for the expansion of the ability to respond from the here and now with the capacities to use signs, characters and objects to represent something else, derive abstract principles from related principles, and communicate them with others through language within the inter-subjective realm of meaning (Wilber, 2000). All layers interact and transform one another. So as accumulated experience and communicative acts build meaning and understanding, emotional responses are transformed according to the individual's developing interpretations specific to their physical and social contexts, also referred to as environments.

Thus, as enlightenment philosophers recognized, the mind is something different than the emotions and provides a whole emergent set of capacities. However, unacknowledged by enlightenment conceptions, the mind is also dependent on the bodily emotional realities since the felt sense within the body is an unbroken continuum, providing the motivating force behind maintaining and directing the mind's ability to

focus and pay attention(Wilber, 1994). For example, the felt sense of interest, curiosity and initiative, or the more intense emotional backdrops such as anger, provide the context within which the mind is engaged. The emotional backdrop needed for sustained mental focus, goodwill and cooperation, must be nurtured just as much as the development of particular concepts. Because of the more outward focus of enlightenment philosophers that gave rise to the 19th century's more "outward looking" approaches to scientific investigation, the nurturing of the more "internal" emotional capacities which depended on the familial developmental context of the home were taken for granted and thus overlooked (Wilber, 1994). In this way, for those whose family environment nurtured the particular emotional states that were similar to those of the middle class experts, they were better able to adapt to the developed educational and psychological strategies that were applied in the schools, such as classroom study of abstracted material, and were able to better succeed both academically and socially. However, those whose home environments, and thus patterning of emotional responses, differed from the middle class experts, the developed institutional teaching practices were not compatible and thus not as effective in supporting these youth along the developmental trajectory these practices were intended to nurture. In many cases, especially earlier on in the educational system's history, these differences were met with quite severe disciplinary actions to get some individuals to conform to the school system's methods and environment (Prentice, 2004). Through more self-reflective modes of inquiry promoted by post-modern and eastern approaches, the reality of the pervasiveness, force and contextual foundation of emotions were more clearly recognized (Wilber, 1994). This recognition of emotion as the foundational context from which the mind is directed is reflected in the integral system's conception of the layers of being. This conceptualization of layers establishes

the importance of the emotional reality in its intentional consideration in the design of any educational context because of its fundamental role in human experience and thus the learning process.

Self-organization through relational exchange

A second guiding concept of integral systems theory is that of *self-organization through the levels of relational exchange* (Wilber, 1983; Wilber, 2000). Within integral systems theory, reality is made out of holons, which are systems of parts that make a recognizable whole, and are themselves a part of larger wholes. For example, an individual human is a whole made out of a system of interacting cells, in turn the human is also an interacting part of a larger society. Thus, within systems theory humans are understood to exist simultaneously as a physiological whole and sociologically as an integrated part. Within systems theory humans are also said to be self-organizing because they exist as a result of their very construction as a process driven and calibrated to create and maintain themselves as a physiological whole and a sociological part (Lazslo, 1991)². The process of self-organization within integral systems theory is synonymous with the process of development and occurs simultaneously on both an *individual* and *social* scale (Lazslo, 1991; Wilber, 1994). Development on an individual scale, as a physiological whole, is the progressive movement towards greater degrees of agency or relative autonomy (Wilber, 1994). Increasing degrees of agency are understood as progressive increases in the ability to maintain and create oneself from a

² This mobilizing concept is based on larger observations around the construction of reality as a series of self-organizing whole/parts, “holons”, that have emerged over the course of the universe’s history; sub-atomic particles, atoms, molecules, cells, multicellular organisms, and societies (Jantsch, 1980; Lazslo, 1991; Wilber, 1994;).

fully dependent baby, up to and past an individual actively creating the conditions of their own maintenance and expression. On a sociocultural scale, in which all individuals are embedded, development is the movement towards greater degrees of *integration* between individuals also understood as *co-operation*. Within integral systems theory, this is also called the degree of *communion* within a social system (Wilber, 1994). This is the progression from self-centered “might is right” individuals through to and past fluidly interdependent and mutually supportive groups and societies (Wilber, 1994). The degree of societal integration is the degree of co-coordinated action between individuals towards shared ends and the ability of that group to adapt to changing circumstances (Lazlo, 1991). The development of social integration is a pervasive force across all types of holons be it cells in the body of an animal, or species of animals in the “body” of a social group. This force of social integration produces *progressively* more socially integrated forms over evolutionary history (Jantch, 1980; Lazlo, 1991; Reid, 2007; Wilber, 1994). Greater degrees of social integration can be understood as the increasing degree of both the differentiation of the parts of a system in terms of the actions they perform and the coordination between the actions of these parts to support the greater freedom of the system to maintain and creatively transform itself in a forever, changing environment (Jantch, 1980; Lazlo, 1991; Reid, 2007; Wilber, 1994). In this way the basic tenets of human motivation within integral systems theory are based upon a context of observation, not confined to only human social history, but integrated within a much larger context of the progressive change towards integrated complexity of life and matter from sub-atomic particles, atoms, molecules, cells, multi-cellular organisms up to and past complex ecological-social systems of which the multi-cellular humans are embedded (Jantsch, 1980; Lazlo, 1991; Wilber, 1994). What is important is that by their very construction humans

are motivated at a very foundational level of their being to integrate with one another towards greater levels of co-operation.

At a human scale, social development towards greater integration occurs over generations where each individual is introduced into this process at birth. In this process each individual is developed by the degree of integration of their immediate social context to whatever point they must act as an individual to support further progression. In this way development is always an individual and collective process where increasing agency is always embedded and dependent upon increasing social co-ordination and inter-dependence (Wilber, 1994). Thus, all agency is “agency in communion” (Wilber, 1994, p.), because the degree of agency that an individual can achieve is always dependent upon the degree of co-ordination within their social group to create the conditions necessary to nurture that agency. Another term used to describe *agency in communion* is *relative autonomy*, where the autonomy of an individual, the degree and diversity by which they can express themselves and change their environment, is always relative to the degree of integration and coordinated action of the people they interact with (Wilber, 1994).

Unlike some earlier developmental psychology perspectives where emotionally controlled rationality is the healthy endpoint of psychological development, within integral systems theory there is no endpoint but only ever increasing degrees of *relative autonomy* or *agency in communion* (Wilber, 2000). In addition, development is understood as not being a given, but rather a creative process between the individual and the collectives they exist within, where trial and error exists as a foundational aspect over

all scales, from the moment to moment interactions of an individual, to the scale of culture over generations of collectives. The process that links the connection between the individual and the collective is that of *relational exchange* (Wilber, 1983).

Self-organization towards increasing degrees of agency and social integration is the process of *relational exchange*, between the layers of being of the individual with the corresponding physical, emotional, mental and spiritual layers of their surrounding physical and social environment (Wilber, 1983). For example, at a physical level an individual is in relational exchange with their environment, growing and maintaining their physical structure by taking in nutrients, digesting these nutrients, and eliminating wastes and decayed material (Wilber, 1983). In this way, the sense organs necessary for perception are developed and maintained. In a similar fashion the relational exchanges of the other layers develop and maintain the emotional, mental and spiritual structures of the individual, which are necessary to respond and co-ordinate with other layers to increasing degrees of integration. The developing structures are the unique individual expression of the layers of being; such as the constellation of different nuanced emotional responses of a person, and their unique network of mental concepts. The elements at each layer that are exchanged between an individual and their physical and social environment are: at the physical (nutrients, sensory stimulus), emotional (feelings), mental (language, meaning, technology) and spiritual (experiences of deep connection) (Wilber, 1983).

Within integral theory, individuals are both creating themselves and their psychological development through the process of self-organization *and* being created through the provision of certain elements from their physical and social environment

(Wilber, 2000). In this way agency is understood to *both* emanate from within the individual, supporting modernist conceptions, *and* is socially constructed between individuals, supporting post-modern realizations, through increasingly integrated social relationships of relational exchange. In this way agency is always *agency in communion*, and healthy development is the progression of increasing degrees of agency in communion. Increasing *agency in communion* is the increasing ability of an individual to establish, maintain and create themselves through their increasing integration and coordination with the collectives they interact within (Wilber, 1994).

The relational exchanges necessary for an individual to create and maintain themselves as a physiological whole, and sociologically as an integrated part, are associated to drives that motivate the individual to seek out certain foundational relationships which have elements from the corresponding layers of their physical and social environment (Wilber, 1983; Wilber, 2000). The elements from the physical and social environment necessary to establish and maintain these foundational relational exchanges can be understood as needs. These needs are not things that an individual passively requires, as some critics who are wary of positioning the individual as a passive object of industrial production point out (Burman, 2008), but are relationships the individual as a self-organizing entity *actively* seeks. These relational exchanges and associated needs have been articulated by Abraham Maslow (1943) and many other developmental theorists from psychology and sociology (Wilber, 2000), and can be understood through an expanded version Maslow's (1943) basic list. Where integral theory labels differ from Maslow (1943), Maslow's (1943) terms will be italicized in the brackets. Brackets may also contain additional descriptions of each exchange. The

foundational relational exchanges are as follows (Wilber, 1983; Wilber, 2000):

1. Material exchanges (food, actions, labour, *physiological needs*);
2. Exchanges of Safety/Security;
3. Exchanges of Power/Control (no direct Maslow analogy except being lumped into “safety/security needs”);
4. Exchanges of Belonging/Care (Membership Discourses);
5. Self-reflexive Exchanges of Esteem (*self-esteem needs*);
6. Autonomous Exchanges (autonomous expression, *self-actualization*)
7. Soul Exchanges (experiences of deep connection, *self-transcendence*).

The relational exchange needs are listed in order of a progressive sequence or hierarchy starting with the most foundational to maintaining an individual as a physiological whole and moving in the direction of establishing them as an increasingly integrated sociological part. Each successive relational exchange builds on and blends into the next during early development, with each successive exchange including elements necessary for the previous exchange and expanding upon them through developing more elaborate relationships resulting from the expansion of the individual’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual capacities (Wilber, 2000). It is the establishment and development of these fundamental relational exchanges that are mandatory for the formation of the self and its identity and it is the maintenance of these foundational exchanges that is necessary for happiness and well-being (Wilber, 2000).

The relational exchanges of the material; safety/security; power/control; care/belongingness; self-esteem; and autonomous exchange are each characterized by an exchange of elements over all the various layers of being; actions (physical), feelings (emotional) and meaning (mental) and experiences of deep connection (spiritual) between the individual and their surrounding physical and social environment (Wilber, 1983). Material exchanges are accomplished at a basic level through the exchange of nutrients, and physical interactions of the individual. As the physical, emotional and mental capacities of an individual complexify through their experience with their social environment, material exchanges begin to include the exchange of elements of all the levels of being and begin taking on the form of labor. With labor an individual's actions, support the movement of materials that support the maintenance of the physical reality of their surroundings (Wilber, 1983).

Safety/and security needs are met through exchanges that establish the feelings associated with trust, when these relational exchanges are not established, fear and anxiety is felt (Graves, 1970; Wilber, 2000). Protection of the physical body are the first experiences associated to this exchange and the ability to be given and seek refuge. For example, this exchange is maintained for a child when they are able to return to the protective and comforting presence of a care-giver should they encounter an experience that causes overwhelming distress (Graves, 1970). As security of the physical body is achieved, relational exchanges of safety and security expand out to include the security of all relationships the individual values.

Following from these exchanges is the emergence of will, in the relational exchanges associated to power and control (Wilber, 2000). In these relational exchanges the individual seeks to feel confidence, through experiences of changing their environment and having others responding to their expression of needs and desires (Graves, 1970). An example of this exchange is a child expressing anger at the actions of a care-giver, and then the care-giver responding in a manner that acknowledges the will of the child. Experiences associated to relational exchanges of power and control are experiences like being heard, and having control over one's situation (Graves, 1970). When the exchanges of power/control are not being maintained; emotions of doubt, shame, and powerlessness are felt (Wilber, 2000).

The relational exchanges associated with care and belongingness build on that of safety/security and power/control, and are experiences of the individual understanding their place within the group (Wilber, 2000). This relational exchange increases the individual's establishment as a sociological part in a network of relationships with others. Feeling elements that establish this type of exchange are that of care, liking and affection along with the exchange of meaning that identifies similarities between individuals that identify them as being a member of the group (Davies, 2000). This identification results through the communication between members that allows for meaning of a shared sense of similarity and purpose (Wilber, 2000).

From belongingness and care, the progression of being an increasingly integrated sociological part is furthered by the individual experiencing being seen and valued through their contributions to the maintenance of the group of which they identify

themselves as being part (Wilber, 2000). These are the fundamental self-reflexive exchanges of esteem. To establish and maintain this exchange, at a physical level the exchange of actions or skills supporting the identified needs of the group need to be experienced. This is felt through the emotions of satisfaction and pride, as one experiences communication that expresses acknowledgement of being valued, and with language that associates the effort of the individual to the appreciated outcomes for those they are in relationship with (Wilber, 1994). This appreciation is expressed through warm affectionate emotions of gratitude and approval. When people do not experience this relational exchange, emotions of insecurity, shame, rejection, and depression can be experienced (Wilber, 2000).

Autonomous exchanges arise out of all previous exchanges (Wilber, 1983; Wilber, 2000). Where self-reflexive exchanges of self-esteem can be scripted, autonomous exchanges are the acknowledgement of the unique contribution of an individual to the needs and desires of the group. Autonomous exchanges at their simplest are the engagement in play. As experience builds the nature of these exchanges becomes more complex with the expanding physical, emotional, mental and spiritual capacities of the individual. These exchanges involve feelings of interest, initiative, appreciation, rightness and enjoyment and take on a wide diversity of forms; and are the main generator of novelty and change within social groups. Uniqueness, creativity and innovation is produced from the autonomous exchanges of individuals, and is shared between members. Whereas self-reflexive exchanges can be developed through supporting the attainment of a prescribed expectation of the group, autonomous exchanges occur outside expectations and are created through the self-initiative or unique

individual expression of a person. The mental elements of exchange unique to autonomous exchanges are the sharing of meaning outside of scripted roles and the emotional and mental acknowledgement of the experienced benefits within a relationship as a result of the unique expressions. Autonomous exchanges produce and honor diversity and creativity. When autonomous exchanges are obstructed, feelings of boredom, purposelessness, apathy and depression can be experienced (Wilber, 1983; Wilber, 2000).

Soul exchanges³ are experiences of deep connection between an individual and any aspect of their physical and social environment (Wilber, 2000). Soul exchanges, as an expression of the spiritual layer of being, co-ordinate an individual with the deepest context of their being, which, is that of being part of the universal process of creation (Wilber, 1994). This connection is achieved and experienced through the engagement of all the layers of being and are exchanges that come with emotional feelings of compassion, expansiveness, love, tranquility, dissolution; mental experiences of visions and deep understanding; and spiritual full body experiences of intuitions and illuminations that transcend the realm of thought (Wilber, 2000).

In the early development of an individual, material exchanges contain comparatively more physical elements, and lay the foundation for the emotional capacities (Wilber, 2000). With the emergence of these emotional capacities, safety/security exchanges and power/control exchanges are further established and made up of the exchange of proportionately more elements from the physical and emotional.

³ Soul exchanges will not be the focus of this thesis, however a better understanding of engaging with this level of exchange intentionally may hold the greatest transformative power in terms of achieving the social integration people.

As these exchanges occur the mental capacities through associations made by the mind take more structure and begin to play a more influential role in structuring the exchanges of the material, safety/security and power/control, but also start guiding exchanges of belongingness/care. As the mental capacities take on more and more shape, self-reflexive esteem and autonomous relational exchanges are further established with the interpretative structures of the mind, accompanied by those of all other layers. Across all cultures, by the time an individual is between 10-14 years old, the mind, emotions and physical body are fully engaged in supporting them in maintaining all of their fundamental exchanges (Wilber, 2000).

The self-system, values and oppression

As a self-organizing system, the “Self-system” is understood to navigate the establishment and maintenance of the fundamental relational exchanges needed for development and well-being (Wilber, 2000). When these relational exchanges are not being engaged, negative affect is felt within the body, which motivates changes of engagement with the physical and social environment as an attempt to re-establish and maintain those foundational relationships (Lazslo, 1991; Wilber, 2000). Negative affect motivates the individual to avoid the current relational experience and seek alternatives. Positive affect motivates the individual to continue engaging and maintain the beneficial relationships. This is the basic process of a self-organizing entity and is called a *feedback loop*. A feedback loop is where the observation of an essential variable is compared to a goal, and then an action is taken to either eliminate any difference or maintain the current state (Lazslo, 1991). The essential variables in the case of an individual are the subjective internal experiences of positive affect associated to the maintenance of the

different levels of relational exchange, be it feelings of satisfaction, trust, affection, confidence, calmness, contentment and purpose etc. When these exchanges are not being maintained or established, negative affect gets experienced as fear, anxiety, depression, boredom, animosity, ambivalence, shame, and hopelessness. However, these feelings are also wedded to relationships with specific elements from the *external* environment that stimulates these *internal* feelings.

The combination of the positive affect experienced when relational exchanges are being engaged and the specific environmental circumstance within which they are maintained make up the individual values (Wilber, 2005). Said otherwise, an individual's values are both the internal experience of positive affect and the elements from their external physical and social environment, whose engagement stimulates that affect. Since each individual develops in their own unique context, the exact circumstances by which their positive affect is maintained differs from individual to individual, and from context to context. It is through this lens of valued relationships between the internal and external, that an individual perceives and interprets the value of engaging in future relationships. The more a situation can be identified from past experiences as leading to positive affect, the higher the likelihood it will be engaged with, and vice versa. In addition, the fulfillment of relational exchanges are not an all or nothing relationship but a matter of degree, where the degree of establishment and maintenance sets the intensity of negative or positive affect experienced within the body. The context where an individual has had success in establishing and maintaining their exchanges, even a little, becomes what they value and those contexts that lead to negative affect is what they avoid.

The exact strategies that an individual engages in to establish their fundamental relational exchanges is a creative process (Wilber, 2005). If certain relational exchanges are obstructed or not readily available, an individual's attention will be directed by the negative affect that accompanies the absence of the exchange and directed towards its establishment through a creative process of trial and error with whatever capacities and strategies lie within their resources (Wilber, 2005). As such, the actual methods, approaches and external elements in which these relational exchanges are accomplished are not a given but are something that must be brought into reality through a relational dialogue between the individual and the physical and social contexts they live within. In this way development is a constructive process. This dialogue occurs over generations within the collective (social context), where individuals are introduced into this dialogue first in their families and early care-givers and then within the practices and institutionalized structures of their culture (Wilber, 1994). In a sense, the family and shared practices of the larger culture provide a scaffolding of the culture's teachings in achieving co-coordinated action, self-maintenance and creation. This scaffolding is the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual environment (context) of the individual of which they are built from and contribute to.

Each relational exchange established and maintained by the developing individual calibrates them to the degree of integration (communion) of their surrounding contexts in terms of what strategies they must employ to pursue the establishment of their fundamental relational exchanges (Wilber, 1994). Thus, at whatever degree an individual's context is in terms of its ability to provide the conditions necessary to

support the individual in maintaining their fundamental exchanges is where an individual is left to learn on their own and create those conditions which are not present. An edge of the degree of communion in a social context is when the fulfillment of one level of an individual's relational exchanges comes in conflict with the fulfillment of another. This is a case when the relational context is not integrated, and thus, conflicting values occur between the social group and the individual. What can become difficult is when individuals move from context to context, as sometimes the calibration to one context with its associated strategies to establish relational exchanges does not fit another context; such may be the case of some marginalized and street-involved youth in the classroom setting.

The obstruction by a social context to the engagement or establishment of a relational exchange of an individual leads to feelings of negative affect associated to powerlessness, oppression and alienation (Wilber, 2005). These experiences lead the oppressed individual to seek alternative contexts, who then often begin experimenting to establish their fundamental exchanges elsewhere. If that oppression is not resolved by the individual because the needed relational exchange can not be found, the oppression can become internalized as repression where internal psychological mechanisms are resorted to in order help the individual deal with the internal discomfort of their negative affect (Wilber, 2005).

Repression is where the individual's self system protects or defends itself from the negative affect by closing off aspects of its being through a variety of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual mechanisms (Wilber, 2000). Repression, or internalized

oppression can be a serious obstacle to establishing relational exchanges since the presence of certain feelings or thought patterns in a particular context may stop an individual from recognizing opportunities to re-establish and maintain needed exchanges when they become available. Thus, these defensive mechanisms can be an obstacle to healthy individual and social development. In tandem with the lack of availability of non-oppressive contextual elements to engage with, this internalized oppression may be a serious obstacle for many marginalized and street involved youth.

To resolve these repressions, it is first important that non oppressive contextual elements are available to re-establish and maintain the fundamental relational exchanges. Then, depending at what level of exchange they occurred at (repressions at a material level look much different than those with exchanges of esteem), it may be necessary for individuals and groups to identify the original oppressions so that obstructive thoughts and feelings can be identified in their originating context to separate an individual's identification with them (Wilber, 2000). This may be necessary in some cases so individuals and the groups they interact with can re-identify with available opportunities and not fall back into identification with oppressive contextual elements. This is part of the perspective of switching focus from the individual (repression) to the context (oppression) in order to create change. Regardless of the exact approach, what is crucial for marginalized and street-involved youth who are not participating in school is the availability of non-oppressive contextual elements to re-establish obstructed relational exchanges along with the necessary support in dealing with possible internalized oppression (repression) that may obstruct their ability to engage in the new contexts. It is through this integral theory lens of values - the levels of relational exchange - and their

relationship to internal feelings and external contextual elements and oppression, that the the experience of marginalized and street-involved youth within the school environment will be re-interpreted.

Interpretation of the school experience of marginalized youth within an Integral Systems Theory framework

Interpreting the school experience of marginalized youth through an integral framework, the term *marginalization* becomes understood as youth who experience a lack of access or obstruction to the establishment and maintenance of their foundational relational exchanges. These obstructions lead to negative affect that commands the focus of these youth towards re-establishing these foundational exchanges. For example, youth who regularly experience hunger are facing obstructions to their material exchanges; youth who are physically and sexually abused and left with feelings of fear, mistrust and disempowerment are facing obstructions to their exchanges of safety/security and power/control; youth who are regularly moving or experience neglect can be facing obstructions to exchanges of belongingness/care. As self-organizing physiological wholes and sociological parts, these youth are adapting to re-establishing these exchanges within the contexts in which obstructions are occurring. They are also attempting to establish and maintain these exchanges, by whatever means, in the other contexts they find themselves in. Individuals will carry the emotions of un-established relational exchanges from one context to the next to the point that the exchange is experienced to a sufficient degree that it does not become a driving force of attention.

Alienation from participation in school occurs when the school environment

through its practices does not allow these youth access and support in establishing and maintaining their fundamental exchanges, and then further penalizes their efforts when their behaviors do not conform to the prescribed expectations of participation. The expectations of obedient behavior and applying oneself individualistically towards academic achievement are the scaffolding provided to youth by society in establishing and maintaining the relational exchanges of belongingness/care and self-reflective exchanges of esteem with the larger society. This scaffolding is narrow in its scope of the different ways in which youth can be engaged and supported by society in valued participation towards their increased social integration, increased relative autonomy and well-being in adulthood.

As discussed above, the reasons for this narrow scope may have arisen because of the socio-historical factors of industrialism and middle class values in the design of high-school practices. The design of these practices falsely took for granted the sufficient establishment of the material, safety/security, power/control, belongingness/care relational exchanges in the home context of all youth and thus did not include considerations for the immediate support needed by some in establishing these exchanges. Although many social services exist in supporting marginalized youth in establishing these exchanges, the time and effort necessary for these considerations most often come into conflict with school participation. Many times these considerations are only noticed after an individual has already experienced dysfunction and social exclusion within the school environment because of poor academic achievement or disruptive behaviors, often because their attention and resources are directed elsewhere. This causes these youth to fall out of pace with their same aged peers and become spatially separated.

This exclusion is the obstruction of relational exchanges of belongingness/care and self-reflexive esteem within mainstream society, as these youth experience the feelings of not being accepted as being part of what is seen as “normal” and are not able to participate in a way that is recognized as having value.

In this way compulsory attendance laws in high-school, age grading, competency grading and segregation place marginalized youth in a difficult situation since attending to their more immediate needs often sets them in conflict with being able to engage in the reflexive exchange of self-esteem offered by mainstream society and needed for broader social integration and independence (relative-autonomy). As supported by the qualitative study of Shulz and Rubel (2001) this oppression of exchanges of esteem with mainstream society because of the narrow range of valued participation in high-school creates a situation where many youth will naturally seek belongingness and esteem from groups that they have easier access to, groups that allow some access to the physical, emotional and mental elements needed to establish these exchanges. Many times the strategies used by these groups are at odds or even threatening to the larger social order, like the strategies of what could be termed gangs.

Furthermore, youth who have had to learn more on their own at a younger age in terms of establishing their basic relational exchanges through the means of trial and error may also experience increased oppression of their autonomous relational exchanges within the high-school environment. Trial and error are creative expressions of the individual associated to engaging and establishing autonomous exchanges. The more prescribed approaches for youth to follow offered within the high-school environment

and many other institutionalized services does not allow for the same degree of autonomous engagement these youth have already established. This loss of freedom may be at odds and not acknowledging of the autonomy by which many marginalized youth have gotten use to navigating their social world by, and in this way these institutionalized approaches may in fact obstruct an already progressed establishment and maintenance of these youth's autonomous relational exchanges and thus produce further alienated feelings. The oppression of the establishment of autonomous exchanges may be an oppression shared between many youth from all different backgrounds in society, leading to the stereotyped emotions of alienation labeled as "adolescent angst" involving behaviors of boredom, rebelliousness, risk taking and substance abuse. However, for marginalized and street-involved youth that have had to develop their autonomous exchanges to support the establishment of lower level exchanges earlier in life, this oppression may be experienced more acutely and even more actively resisted.

As discussed in an earlier section, alternative programs acknowledge to some degree the different reality of many of these youth and provide a more flexible schedule to accommodate their autonomy and life priorities, a more safe and inclusive learning environment and even counseling support to increase the emotional and mental resources available to developing effective strategies in establishing and maintaining other fundamental relational exchanges (dealing with repressions). This counseling acknowledges the emotional layers of being and seeks to improve the youth's relative autonomy in terms of establishing for themselves relational exchanges of safety/security, power/control and belongingness/care.

Despite providing a more accepting, supportive and inclusive environment that attends to the emotional layers, the direct and immediate inclusion of supporting youth in the development of their relative autonomy, in terms of the establishment and maintenance of their material exchanges, is still overlooked in the majority of alternative education programs. As expressed by youth in BC alternative education programs, support in establishing the immediate concerns of material exchanges such as employment experience and training is needed (Smith et. al. 2007a), and possibly, the direct engagement of these youth in paid participation, since many leave school in order to make money. Material exchanges are at the foundation of maintaining all the other exchanges since such things as food, water and shelter support the proper functioning of the body to move and respond. Supporting the immediate development of relative autonomy and engagement of the material exchanges of these youth should therefore be given utmost priority, as without it every other intervention will fail. Although some alternative education programs provide the flexibility of schedule needed to allow youth to work part-time, the support that some of these youth need in terms of learning the social and life skills necessary to maintain a job and co-operate in a working environment are not provided especially within the more individualized curriculums offered in alternative programs.

Education within high-school participation removes youth from economic participation. What this effectively does is dissociate the establishment and maintenance of the material exchanges of youth with the establishment and maintenance of the exchanges of esteem and puts the establishment of these two exchanges in direct conflict in the short term if youth have no other access to financial resources. The dissociation of

these two exchanges in the scaffolding provided to youth, especially those with already obstructed material exchanges can have potentially oppressive consequences of excluding these youth from both these exchanges with the broader society in adulthood. This can occur since needing work in adolescence distracts from the exchanges of esteem with society in school, which leads to increased difficulty in accessing the job market in adulthood because of an absence a graduation certificate.

Integral Design

From an integral systems theory perspective, educational spaces that would avoid conflicts of values that lead to social exclusion are the ones that intentionally support marginalized and street-involved youth in developing and maintaining *all of their fundamental relational exchanges*. These types of educational spaces are especially important if participation in these environments are made compulsory by law, since if an individual has difficulty participating because attention is focused on establishing a relational exchange that is assumed established by the school, the school may become a further oppressive force. This is because the school may not only be disallowing access to specific relational elements of need, but also further obstructing exchanges of belongingness and esteem through segregation of these youth from their peers for not being able to participate within mainstream school society.

Obstruction or oppression within educational environments of marginalized and street-involved youth can be avoided by expanding the opportunities in which these youth have to engage in valued social participation. Being obedient within a classroom context toward academic achievement is a more narrow collectively esteemed option for social

participation. By the time any individual is thirteen, they are more than capable of contributing to society in a variety of meaningful and productive ways. Although academic achievement as a prescribed curriculum has some benefits for social coordination in adulthood, other forms of social participation like contributing to community projects could be provided where marginalized youth could participate successfully, feel more immediately useful, and thus, have access to more social exchanges of esteem. Through this type of engagement the same goals of social coordination can be achieved and, if done in a balanced manner, would not undermine the necessary development of the literacy, numeracy and social awareness needed for a healthy and progressive Canadian society.

More holistic and inclusive developmental environments for marginalized and street involved youth are those where the scaffolding for exchanges of esteem allows for a participation that is broad enough to accommodate individuals in establishing and maintaining all their fundamental exchanges; from the material right on through to the autonomous. This broadness is achieved when the strategies required by society for maintaining an exchange of esteem are not obstructive in supporting youth who are developing in their strategies for other exchanges. An aspect of this broadness is that the provided scaffolding includes, transforms, and diversifies youth's previous strategies for maintaining other exchanges in one combined effort. This can be achieved when the learning environment provides a means to engage in exchanges of esteem with the broader society, and also allows for the alignment of the youths' intentions, creativity and problem solving related to Autonomous Exchanges, with the ultimate goal of establishing and maintaining their exchanges of belongingness/care right on down to the material.

An integral approach to designing alternative educational spaces for marginalized and street involved youth then acknowledges three central considerations. Firstly, an integral approach intentionally supports the development of an individual's relative autonomy in all their relational exchanges. This first consideration comes from the recognition that all individuals are actively engaged in establishing and maintaining their fundamental exchanges, and if they are obstructed in doing so, they will find ways to engage in these pursuits with or without support because they are emotionally propelled to do so. Self-medicating with drugs, identifying with excluded peers, joining gangs, and entering into the street economy are all related to the active engagement in addressing the negative affect experienced as a result of obstructed exchanges; be it boredom, depression, insecurity, hunger etc. Specifically, for marginalized and street involved youth, this first consideration of providing access to the development of all relational exchanges is attended to through the provision of a broader variety of options, in order for these youth to participate in exchanges of esteem with the broader society that are not in conflict with the maintenance of their other fundamental exchanges.

Secondly, an integral approach acknowledges that these fundamental exchanges occur through the exchange of elements from all the layers of an individual's being, with the corresponding layers of their immediate physical and social environment. This consideration requires that in order to support positive change, developmental environments must intentionally engage youth not only a mental level, but also on a physical, emotional and spiritual level, in order that the necessary skills, feelings and sense of connection are nurtured to support full valued participation.

Thirdly, an integral approach recognizes that the unique trajectory of experience and contexts that a youth has developed within sets their current strategies in establishing their fundamental exchanges, which they bring with them into any new situation. This means that integrated developmental environments for youth that have experienced marginalization are those that take into account how their past experiences play into their current interpretations, emotional responses and behaviors. Thus, an integral approach takes into consideration the unique trajectory of marginalized and street involved youth by being aware and working from their perspective of values and strategies towards a shared goal of helping them maintain their own well-being (agency) and achieving valued social participation (communion).

Relationships of the Integral Approach to Other Current Youth Care and Alternative Education Theories

Three common frameworks that complement an integral approach and are used within youth work and alternative education programs that work with marginalized and street-involved youth are: Experiential Education, Resiliency and Empowerment (Cargo, Grams, Ottosonn, Ward & Green, 2003; Itin, 1999; Knight, 2007). These three theories draw particular awareness to certain dimensions of the integral approach and are useful to review because they expand the language available to the Integral Systems approach as a meta-theory.

At the core of experiential education is the belief that the development of a person is best achieved through direct experience, where the content being taught is just

as important as the process by which it is taught (Itin, 1999). Like integral theory, experiential education requires the engagement of the whole person, not just in the learning of facts but the educational engagement of their intellectual, emotional, social, political, spiritual and physical self (Itin, 1999). Within experiential education, it is reasoned that if the intent is to develop healthy, critically thinking, self-motivated, problem-solving individuals, who participate actively in their communities, the only way to achieve this is to provide environments where individuals can practice being and doing just that. In this way, the philosophy of experiential education, much like integral theory, sees the overemphasis on individualized achievement of a prescribed curriculum, within the abstracted environment of the classroom, as standing in opposition to supporting marginalized and street involved youth in taking care of themselves and cooperatively engaging in their community.

Central to the orientation of experiential education in the design of educational environments are Dewey's (1938) concepts of *continuity* and *interaction* (Dewey, 1938), which also mirror an integral approach. Continuity refers to the idea that we learn something from every experience, and one's accumulated learned experience influences the nature of one's future experiences. Interaction builds on continuity and is the idea that an individual's present experiences are dependent on the product of their past experiences, knowing that past experiences make up an individual's current interpretations of reality and emotion (Dewey, 1938). According to Dewey (1938), just like the consideration to the youth's past experiences of their relational exchanges within the integral approach, the experiential educator, who cannot control the student's past experiences, should always try to understand them so that better and more relevant

educational situations can be presented. Like the integral approach, this approach seeks to understand the past experiences of a youth in order to better present educational situations that are individualized. This youth centered approach is supported within experiential education through the promotion of youth engaging in new challenging experiences and then supporting them in reflecting in dialogue with the educator and other group members on their own subjective interpretations of these learning experiences.

This youth centered approach is achieved through following the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). The experiential learning cycle is an iterative process of looping over and over on itself with stage four leading into a new stage one. The cycle is as follows:

- 1) Action that creates and experience,
- 2) Reflection on the action and experience in context to the goals and values of the individual,
- 3) Abstractions drawn from the reflection,
- 4) Application of the abstraction to a new experience or action towards desired outcome.

Through this process, the intentionality of an individual is nurtured in changing themselves in the direction they value, with the dialogue involved in this process allowing for reflection and helping the educator better understand the youth's perspective and how to best support their learning. This strategy is very complementary to an

integral approach as this practice has a bootstrapping effect in increasing the intentionality of the individual and thus their agency, and when conducted in a group, develops communion through shared understanding of each member's process.

Resiliency and youth empowerment frameworks further support the integral approach by complementing and building on the insights of experiential education by drawing further awareness to the importance of nurturing agency, and the link between supporting the well-being of the individual and their engagement in valued social participation. Resiliency has traditionally been conceptualized as “those factors and processes that interrupt the trajectory from risk to problem behaviors or psychopathology in youth resulting in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity” (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994, p.4). However, by recognizing the shared underlying intent behind behaviors more traditionally interpreted as resilient and those deemed maladaptive or risky, the understanding of resiliency has been expanded as a state that all youth have that simply needs to be developed (Knight, 2007). This expanded recognition of resiliency in all youth is gained through a shift of perspective that sees things like gang membership as an act of street-involved youth to reclaim agency and power outside of the normative social discourse from which they have been excluded (Knight, 2007; Ungar & Teram, 2000). In this way, resiliency can be maladaptive if youth in search of restoring positive affect can only achieve it in contexts and through strategies that are prone to risk and the development of unhealthy relationships and identities.

The integral approach recognizes the self-organizing quality of youth by supporting the development of their relative autonomy and by broadening their access to

socially sanctioned exchanges of esteem. A resiliency framework recognizes this same quality of self-organization by suggesting a similar approach. Within the resiliency framework, in order to promote resiliency and wellbeing, one should promote the agency by which marginalized and street involved youth navigate their social context by providing them with opportunities to express their power in ways that protect their health and wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their communities (Kidd, 2003; Unger and Teram, 2000). Supporting the expression of a youth's power towards the wellbeing of the community in effect is supporting the development of the youth's relationship of the exchange of esteem with the broader society.

The empowerment framework further compliments the resiliency framework by further articulating the importance that an environment can have in nurturing agency. The empowerment framework also brings further attention to the Integral approach's emphasis on providing youth with access to socially esteemed participation, and more specifically, participation that is integrated with the youths' other fundamental exchanges. Empowerment can be defined as a process by which people gain control over their lives and environment by increasing their critical self and social awareness by supporting them to address societal problems through meaningful engagement in their communities, organizations and institutions (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman et. al., 1992). Like the development of relative autonomy in the integral approach, empowerment is a multi-level construct that has been described as both an individual and collective process. Overall, the concept makes the link between changes at the individual level (i.e. increased sense of well-being, self-esteem and control) and changes in the environment (i.e. socio-political structures and quality of life). The goals of empowerment are to foster healthy

individuals while at the same time creating healthier communities and community change (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994).

Empowerment of marginalized and street involved youth thus emphasizes the crucial importance of adolescent participation in meaningful activities that offer opportunities for skill development, for overcoming challenges, and for the promotion of positive social bonding between individuals (particularly with adults) as well as communities and institutions (Cargo et al., 2003; Kim et. al, 1999). Like the need for a broader social scaffolding in the provision of exchanges of esteem within integral theory, within the empowerment framework opportunities are meant to give youth a sense of purpose and meaning and prevent what Chinman and Linney (1998) has called a sense of 'rolelessness'. Positive reinforcement and recognition of success and efforts are crucial from adults in these experiences and an essential element in the development of self-esteem and self-efficacies related to individual empowerment (Chinman et. al., 2003; Kim et. al., 1998). In the model developed by Cargo et al. (2003), youth empowerment is understood as a transactional process that occurs by a gradual shift in practice towards more egalitarian practices, through a partnering relationship with adults in a supportive and welcoming environment (Cargo et. al., 2003).

Together, the experiential education, resiliency and empowerment frameworks, like the integral approach, attend to the development of all fundamental relational exchanges. They do this by proposing that the development of the agency of marginalized and street-involved youth toward maintaining their own well-being is supported through increased social integration by building competence through meaningful participation,

capacity building and action, within a caring and supportive environment. Like an integral approach, together, these three theories suggest that when engaging marginalized and street-involved youth in this manner, it relieves them from having to resort to strategies that puts them at risk of developing negative identities and further social exclusion.

Integral Design Recommendations for Effective Practices in the Engagement of Marginalized and Street-involved

An integral approach supporting the development of the relative autonomy of marginalized and street involved youth towards positive social integration, and complemented by the supporting frameworks of experiential education, resiliency and empowerment, translates into three concrete integral program design recommendations.

Recommendation One: Skill development through active direct participation in valued contribution to the community

Recommendation Two: Caring Adults/Reflective Facilitation

Recommendation Three: Mixed aged peer group from diverse backgrounds

The first integral design recommendation: "Skill development through active participation in valued contribution to the community," recommends that the overall context of participation must provide the central means of valued participation (the socially sanctioned means by which youth engage in exchanges of esteem) that is broad enough to satisfy the following two conditions:

- i) All youth can be successful in being seen and seeing themselves as valued contributors. (Access to societal exchanges of esteem)
- ii) Participation does not obstruct the maintenance of their other fundamental exchanges (non obstructive access to this exchange of esteem)

To achieve this, the environment by necessity must be experiential in that it engages youth at all levels of their being thus engaging youth physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, through learning the skills and attitudes for the benefit of themselves and others by actively doing them. As a crucial aspect, this learning environment must support the maintenance and development of the material exchanges of these youth.

The second integral design recommendation “Caring adults/Reflective Facilitation” recommends that adults who facilitate the development of the skills, routines and standards of this participation be trained in being able to provide caring, respectful and supportive relationships. This type of facilitation requires that program facilitators are able to engage youth from the youth’s perspective in a way that is acknowledging of their past trajectory, able to engage them in a way that nurtures the development of their relative autonomy through supporting reflective practices and can provide insight in addressing “internalized oppressions”. These reflective practices help youth not only make sense of their experience within the program, but also supports them to make sense of their past experiences outside of the program, which they bring with them. An example of one of the many reflective practices is engaging youth in the debriefing associated with the experiential learning cycle and dialogue following techniques in

narrative therapy (White, 1991). The training of these adults requires a holistic understanding of human socio-cultural/psychological processes and developed communication, counseling and group process facilitation skills. It is a necessity for these adults to support the development and maintenance of relational exchanges of safety/security, power/control and care/belongingness through attention to the emotional/interpretive dimensions of the participants and group. In addition, these adults must be capable of supporting the development of skills necessary to support the youth's ability to contribute to their community necessary for establishing and developing material exchanges.

The third integral design recommendation, "Mixed aged peer group from diverse backgrounds" is a recommendation in further consideration of the past trajectory of these youth who have already experienced alienation and exclusion from the public education system and have begun to develop an identity of exclusion from the broader society. This recommendation acknowledges the common experience of these youth who mistrust adults who are in roles of authority and sources of esteem, and due to the mistrust, have adapted through seeking this esteem from peers seen as similar to them. This design element directly addresses this reality by avoiding placing these youth in a situation where they are being segregated with peers who are facing similar challenges. This avoids reinforcing an excluded identity in addition to limiting opportunities for expanding their network of social resources because of a lack of access to developing supportive peer relationships with individuals from other backgrounds. In order to assess the relevancy of the integral design recommendations in application, a case study of a program that was run as a pilot application of these recommendations will be analyzed.

PART TWO: CASE STUDY

This case study is intended to serve as an experiential assessment of the relevancy of the integral design recommendations for effective practices in the engagement of marginalized and street-involved youth developed in Part One of this study. The program that will be the focus of the case study will be referred to as “The Apprenticeship Skills Program” and was run as a pilot application of the integral design recommendations. The original name of the program has been changed to the “Apprenticeship Skills Program” in order to protect participant anonymity.

A case study is used to explore the relevancy of the integral design recommendations as applied in the Apprenticeship Skills Program because this approach is useful to articulate innovative projects and is a powerful tool for descriptive and explanatory purposes (Yin, 1981). For an explanatory case study, the construction and testing of an explanation must be a primary objective (Mohd Noor, 2008, Yin, 2002). Although this case study has a descriptive role serving to support the description of the application of an integral approach, its central explanatory role seeks to investigate *whether, and in what way does a program whose design is informed by an integral systems approach support the positive social engagement of adolescents experiencing marginalization and/or street involvement.* Case studies are effective for this type of explanatory investigation because of their ability to cover both subjective experience and context by using multiple sources of evidence and thus allowing for causal inferences to be made between the two (Yin, 2002).

Program Description: Application of Integral Design Recommendations

The Apprenticeship Skills Program focused on the development of employability skills within an agricultural community context to support the needs and positive social integration of youth who were not attending public school and whose life situation could be described as marginalized and/or street involved. Although the program was not directly associated with the public education system, its intention was to serve as an example of a program that could serve as an adjunct to support alternative education programs within the public system or as a stand alone program. This program ran as a pilot and involved a three month full time on site skill development segment and a one month off-site work placement. In the three month on site segment, youth learned general employability skills along with specific skills in landscaping, agriculture and natural restoration. These skills were learned experientially through the development and maintenance of an educational market garden as well as the restoration of an area of natural habitat that surrounded the large property where the garden was located. The property belonged to an outdoor learning center for a non-profit youth agency that administered the program. The last portion of the program involved a one month work placement in a company or community agency chosen by the participant in a field related to the specific skills and interests they developed within the on site segment. The integral design recommendations described in Part I were implemented into the program as follows:

Recommendation One: Skill development through active direct participation in valued contribution to the Community.

To meet the criteria of the first recommendation “Skill development through active participation in direct valued contribution to the community” the development of an educational market garden for a non-profit community youth agency served as the learning context. Through the development and maintenance of this garden and the restoration of the surrounding areas of the property, youth learned experientially not only basic employability skills such as following a structured work day and interpersonal communication but also specific applied skills in agriculture, landscaping, natural restoration and media production relevant to the local job market. In this way youth were learning concrete skills that were directly increasing their chances of employment in a broad range of areas through directly contributing to the creation and maintenance of a valued community asset, namely, the market garden. The purpose of the educational market garden was to provide an experiential learning space for the over 500 youth from all ages and demographics who visited the community agency’s outdoor learning center. Its purpose was also to provide healthy nutritious organic food for the agency’s programs, as well as fund raise for the agency through the sale of the produce.

This participatory learning environment was intended to provide an immediate sense of social contribution for the participating youth. To achieve this, youth were provided with the experience of directing their efforts toward the development of an educational program within a non-profit society; the growing of food for their community; and the improvement of the surrounding environment’s natural and physical

area. On a deeper level this participation was also intended to connect these youth to a growing social movement of sustainability, food security and creativity in what Thomas Berry (1999) calls the “Great Work” of the new millennium. This great work is “to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner (Berry, 1999, p. 3).” This movement emphasizes the design and creation of human institutions and practices that are more integrated with the natural environment; that rely less on non-renewable fuels, as well as promote more localized food production and the committed promotion of democratic processes. Such processes are intended to be respectful of the individual while focusing on developing non-exploitative relationships based on mutual need (Berry, 1999).

The Permaculture movement (Holmgren, 2002) is an example of the social movement towards a more sustainable future. The ethics and practices of the Permaculture movement were used to provide the foundational philosophical context of the program because of its direct fit with an integral system’s approach. As a result, the philosophy of the Permaculture movement supports integrated alternative educational environments because it anchors the above integral design recommendations, which are intended to support the healthy social integration of marginalized youth, within an even broader systemic context of seeking integration within the larger community of all living things. Permaculture means “Permanent–Culture” and is centered on the concept of both environmental and social sustainability (Mollison, 1988). Permaculture is the practice of designing sustainable human habitats through assembling conceptual, material and strategic components in a pattern, which functions to benefit life in all its forms. The

foundational ethics of Permaculture are: Care of Land, Care of People and Care of Process (Mollison, 1988). Care of land is the foundational ethic that arises through the recognition of the need to work with nature through the understanding of it as being the bases of supporting the material reality from which all else depends (Holmgren, 2002). Care of people is the recognition of the mutual social inter-dependence between people requiring attention to supporting shared physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs (Holmgren, 2002). Care of Process is the recognition of the need for self-regulation of consumption and growth and the need for any design to redistribute any surplus towards the first two ethics - Care of land and Care of People (Holmgren, 2002). A central aspect of the Care of Process ethic is Permaculture's commitment to the responsibility to relinquish power (Holmgren 2002). This responsibility is to "return function and responsibility to life and to people, until no authority is needed...where successful design is to create a self-managed system (Mollison, 1988, p. 16)." This commitment to relinquish power directly follows the integral approach of supporting the development of the relative autonomy of youth.

By nature, a permaculture orientation seeks to address the underlying causes of oppression and inequality that have resulted from the exploitative approaches and institutional designs that are contributing to our current environmental and social challenges. There is broad consensus amongst scientists and social theorists that our current trajectory of consumption patterns will inevitably lead to severe resource shortages, environmental degradation and social unrest (Freidman, 2008). From this perspective the direct inclusion of youth in the transformation of society towards a more sustainable culture is of utmost social value and in the words of Bill Mollison (1988), the

grandfather of the Permaculture movement:

The ultimate end to a growth economy is the same as an analogous growth: cancer. But for national economies, the victims are nature, soils, forests, people, water, and quality of life. There is one, and only one, solution, and we have almost no time to try it. We must turn all our resources to repairing the natural world, and train all our young people to help. They want to. We need to give them this last chance to create forests, soils, clean waters, clean energies, secure communities, stable regions, and to know how to do it from hands-on experience ... the greatest change we need to make is from consumption to production, even if on a small scale, in our own gardens. If only 10% of us do this, there is enough for everyone. (Mollison, 1998, p. 130)

The Apprenticeship Skills program engages youth in valued participation both in an immediate way through producing something for their community and more indirectly through contribution to a larger social movement. Despite this, it is the interpretation of the youth that counts in how much they feel valued for their efforts. To help build this interpretation, the value of their work was communicated to participant youth through several intentionally planned practices within the program. First, a detailed explanation of the intentions and purpose of the program were expressed to the youth to invite them in identifying with the value of the project's social purpose and to motivate their voluntary enrollment during a pre-program information session. These underlying intentions of the program were

continually reinforced to participants throughout the program, during guest workshops and during the framing of activities. Secondly, direct contact with youth, agency staff and community members that would benefit from the garden and its produce was facilitated so that youth could see first hand the benefits of their work. Lastly, youth were provided a wage.

This last experience of being provided a wage is the most widely understood experience of social value in our current society since it is a direct exchange of value. By being provided a wage, youth directly understand that the activities they are engaging in have value to those inviting them to engage in those activities because it is a direct transference of power. The achievement of a good grade for a certain degree of participation is a societal recognition of value, however, its transference of power is not immediate and thus the motivational feedback loop of the utility to the individual, for their effort, can be obscured if the value of their effort is not immediately apparent or expressed emotionally, through gratitude or an increase in status.

This third experience of social value of being provided a wage also addresses an aspect of one of the conditions of the first recommendation; that the context of valued social participation “Does not obstruct the development and maintenance of the youth’s other fundamental exchanges.” In this case, being provided a wage avoids obstructing the immediate material exchanges of the youth. As discussed earlier, for many marginalized and street involved youth, having the resources to provide for basic physical needs is a concern for educational

participation. By being provided a wage, it eliminates common distractions from unfulfilled basic needs that inhibit youth from learning the skills needed to further secure their material exchanges in the future. Youth in the Apprenticeship Skills Program were provided a minimum wage of 8 dollars an hour for 30 hours a week over the entire course of the program. Other design features that address the idea that participation should not obstruct the development and maintenance of the youth's other fundamental exchanges are addressed in the integral design recommendations of "Caring Adults/Reflective Facilitation" and "Mixed Aged Peer Group From Diverse Backgrounds."

To insure breadth of inclusivity for valued participation, the other condition for the first recommendation is that "All youth can be successful in being seen and seeing themselves as valued contributors." The context of experientially learning agriculture, landscaping and natural restoration skills through building an educational market garden for a non-profit agency, meets this condition because the projects and tasks necessary to complete these objectives accommodate a very wide range of interests and skills, which allow each youth immediate access to meaningful contributions regardless of their initial ability. The tasks available in the context of the Apprenticeship Skills program range from the concrete to the abstract and from the physical to the mental. For example, these tasks spanned from the simpler more physical exercises of weeding and digging to the more complex and abstract of researching growth patterns of plants and crop rotation cycles for the drafting and design of landscapes and vegetable production. The spectrum of different projects and tasks youth could participate in were not only limited to landscaping, agriculture and restoration, but also included any aspect of the management

of the program that individuals were involved in. This expanded the breath of opportunity for employability skills training into areas such as administrative tasks, media production, and the culinary arts.

The range of projects within the Apprenticeship Skills program that youth could choose to participate in included:

- landscaping and installation of a perennial food forest
- vegetable production
- wetland remediation
- irrigation installation
- construction of garden infrastructure
- administration of education material and program organization
- photo and video production for evaluation and promotion
- meal planning and preparation
- educational facilitation for visiting groups of children

This diversity in projects was intended to give the youth a variety of options to build skills that were both employable and interesting. The gradation of ability in terms of the skill required to complete the tasks associated with each project allows for the opportunity for each youth, regardless of their ability, to experience immediately meaningful contribution to the completion of the projects with each project themselves clearly and tangibly contributing to the final goal of creating a valued community asset and production of food.

Recommendation Two: Caring Adults/Reflective Facilitation

To fulfill the recommendation of Caring Adults/Reflective Facilitation, two graduate students from the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria (one the author of this thesis), were used as the central facilitators for the Apprenticeship Skills Program. Facilitators had completed both undergraduate and graduate training in individual and family counseling, as well as training in group facilitation and human change processes. The underlying perspectives of these courses emphasized a developmental-ecological perspective and a relational orientation to working with youth. A developmental-ecological perspective highlights the complex interactions between a person's development and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings (Mattingly et. al., 2002). A relational orientation recognizes the interpersonal relationship as a foundation from which psycho-emotional development occurs (Mattingly et. al., 2002).

Central to the facilitators' training and experience are the foundational attitudes for professional Child and Youth Care work. These attitudes promote the wellbeing of youth and families in a context of respect and collaboration, focusing on nurturing the strengths that come from cultural and human diversity (Mattingly et. al., 2002). Within a Child and Youth Care perspective, care is seen as essential for emotional growth, social competence, rehabilitation and treatment (Mattingly et. al., 2002). Each of the facilitators had over 7 years of experience working with adolescents within fields associated to practices of experiential learning and education, such as outdoor adventure therapy, service learning and one-on-one youth mentorship.

To support a reflective facilitation practice, facilitators regularly applied a variety of group process routines to support the development of inclusive group norms, participant autonomy, problem solving and critical awareness. These routines included:

- Daily check-in circle with youth reviewing the day, moods and anything of importance to participants;
- An initial week of team building exercises and group process about establishing norms of support and acceptance;
- Bi-weekly group debriefs to give youth voice to appreciations and concerns;
- Monthly group debriefs and feedback sessions to modify the program throughout its duration;
- Mid-term and program ending individual debriefs and interviews to track individual learning and deepen reflection;
- On-going one on one individual check-ins and debriefs as needed for youth facing challenges.

In terms of experience in agriculture, landscaping and natural restoration, both program facilitators had numerous years of experience working in those fields. They also had previously received formal training in landscape design and sustainable agricultural practices to a degree of competency capable of teaching entry level skills and knowledge. Both individuals held certification in Permaculture landscape design. In addition, there were many other volunteers supporting the program, including: a young farmer with a degree in agro-ecology, an elderly farmer with over 15 years of farming experience and, numerous workshop facilitators with specialized skills in the above fields.

Recommendation Three: Mixed aged peer group from diverse backgrounds

To achieve a mixed aged peer group from diverse backgrounds, the Apprenticeship Skills program advertised itself as an agricultural, landscaping and natural restoration apprenticeship program for youth between the ages of 15-30. These positions were then intentionally filled with individuals over a wide range of age and demographics, reserving four placements for school aged youth not engaged in the public education system and experiencing marginalization and street involvement. In the final off site work placement portion of the program, peer groups were naturally composed of mixed aged individuals from differing backgrounds, as the work environments within these fields naturally took on this type of demographic composition. Because the program was advertised as an apprenticeship program for specific vocational fields, application into the program was on a voluntary basis and thus individuals who applied and were part of the selection pool were grouped together based on shared interest. This is in opposition to individuals being un-voluntarily grouped together into a shared space based on belonging to a narrow age cohort and range of competency, as is the case with school aged youth who have difficulty participating in the regular stream within more traditional alternative programs.

To be accepted into the program, because of funding requirements, all participants had to be below the age of 30 and demonstrate to a third party employment service that they were facing some barrier to employment. This could have had a segregating effect, fortunately, along with characteristics associated with marginalization and street-involvement, the range of what qualified as a barrier was very wide and loosely defined and included such things as living in a rural location, having a language barrier, being

part of a visible minority, and having a health concern. This wide breadth of what constituted a “barrier” allowed for the selection of individuals from a very broad spectrum of different demographics and life situations. In this way, the six remaining positions were filled by individuals who were not facing the same kind of marginalization and street involvement as the four youth for whom the supportive aspects of the program were designed around.

The youth that filled the other six positions included a female 30 year old recent Japanese immigrant trained as a computer engineer looking for a new career, a 29 year old male tree planter with a landscaping background looking to get into farming, a female 26 year old aspiring farmer who had studied herbology, two (a male and a female) 23 year old middle class activist musicians taking a break from university and a 21 year old female that had recently moved from out of province, and was struggling to find work. Along with the mixed gendered group of program volunteers, who were from education and agricultural backgrounds, with one being over 65, a very mixed demographic of peers at different life stages of maturity was achieved compared to that found within an alternative school setting within the public education system.

Methodological Orientation

The analysis of this case study is guided primarily by a qualitative descriptive methodological approach (Giorgi, 1992; Sandelowski, 2000) drawing very peripherally on some aspects of interpretive/hermeneutic methodological traditions (Lowenburg, 1993; Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 1981). A case study using qualitative descriptive methodologies (Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 2002) is particularly relevant to this exploration because it

reflects an integral systems theory approach. Within integral systems theory, reality can be experienced from four mutually influencing but different perspectives that Wilber (1995) calls “the four quadrants.” The first quadrant, *the subjective (I)*, covers “internal” experiences of an individual such as felt feelings, intentions, motivations and thoughts. The second, *the objective (it)*, is the perspective of the subject (in this case the author of this research) looking out and experiencing “external” objects such as observing the behaviors of others. The third, *the inter-subjective (we)*, is the perspective of meaning, language and values used to communicate between individuals their experiences of “internal” subjective phenomena and “external” objects. The fourth quadrant, *the inter-objective (its)*, is the perspective of “external” structuring elements of a society such as policies, laws, institutional practices and technology who structure individual subjective experience and within through their design express the inter-subjective meaning of a culture (Wilber, 1994). The *subjective* and *objective* perspectives represent the “internal” and “external” perspectives of the individual respectively. The *individual* is always in interaction and being constructed by their context and therefore, the *inter-subjective* and *inter-objective* realities are the “internal” and “external” perspectives, from the view point of the context, also referred to as “the collective” (Wilber, 1994).

From an integral systems theory approach, insight is generated through accounting for and navigating between each of the four quadrants, and understanding the interactive relationship between them in order to develop a holistic understanding. A case study using qualitative descriptive methodologies supports the use of data from a variety of relevant sources regardless of whether they are traditionally used in methodologies described as qualitative or quantitative, positivist or structuralist, or

belonging to a particular methodological tradition (Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 2002). This methodological orientation analyzing a case study through a qualitative descriptive methodology allows for an accounting of the four quadrants, and thus facilitates a holistic, integral system perspective of relationships. Evidence used in this case study will include elements from the perspective of each of the four quadrants:

- *The objective*: attendance records and field observations of participant behavior using historical records and field notes
- *The subjective*: the experiences of youth participants generated through interviews;
- *The inter-objective*: descriptive data such as program practices, agency policy, laws and descriptions of the program's environment.
- *The inter-subjective*: the interpretive lens of the researcher generated through the reading of socio-historical and theoretical research material as outlined in Part One and through dialogue with the research participants.

Participant interviews were a particular focus in this case study. In general, the voices of marginalized and street involved youth are not well represented in educational research (Arnett, 1996; Brown, Higgins, Pierce et al., 2003; Smith, 2000; Smyth, 2009). Traditionally this subjective perspective has been obscured or lost in more outcomes based research that uses positivist quantitative frameworks because of a historic privileging of the objective quadrant of reality (Smith, 2000, Wilber, 2001). Given that the inclusion of the perspectives of youth experiencing marginalization in the design of the social practices meant to serve them has been a major theme in this thesis, focused

attention will be given to the experiences of these youth and the meaning they ascribe to them. Thus, the subjective experiences of these youth will be used as the pivot point from which to make sense of the contextual factors motivating the degree of their social engagement within the case study program.

The specific analysis of this case study following a qualitative descriptive methodology will first draw from numerous sources of data such as participant observations, program documents and participant interviews to describe the participating youth and the outcomes of the Apprenticeship Skill Program in order to paint an immediate context for the evaluation of the integral design recommendations. Second, the analysis will thematically highlight the meanings that participating marginalized and street involved youth gave to their experiences in the program. Third, the meaning of these youth's experiences will then be located within their personal biographies and the social environments in which their experiences occurred.

Procedure

Data for this case study was collected through a variety of means. First of all secondary data from the Apprenticeship Skills Program was collected from the program's documentation sources. These included: weekly debrief notes that contained participant observations, process reflections and significant occurrence reports; the program's participant satisfaction evaluations; attendance records; video documentation of activities, and the program's objectives and design documents. As the researcher was also one of the main facilitators of the Apprenticeship Skills Program, personal field notes that documented daily activities and reflections on youth participation were also included.

The majority of this secondary data was used to add contextual information for qualitative description and interpretive aspects of the study.

Secondly, data from the study participants was collected through a one hour, individual semi structured interview. Participants in this study were selected based on their fit to the following study criteria:

- School aged and not participating in the public education system
- Could be identified through their lifestyle or past experiences (per the description given in the literature review in Part One of the study) as marginalized or street involved.
- Had participated in the Apprenticeship Skills Program.

Three youth fit this criteria, one female and two males all of Caucasian decent. A more detailed description of these participants will be given further down in the “Findings” section. Participants were all very articulate and able to give detailed explanations of their experiences and perceptions.

For the interviews, the researcher developed a series of open-ended questions to assist study participants in focusing on the experience under investigation. Primary questions were designed to elicit descriptions of the experience rather than the simple recollection of events, and secondary questions were designed as probing questions to elicit a greater depth of description and meaning in the narratives of the youth. Examples of the questions are as follows:

Primary Questions:

What was it like for you being in the program?

How would you describe this program to a friend, an adult?

Was the program helpful/unhelpful and in what way?

What kept you motivated to see the program through?

What were your most memorable experiences?

What was this experience like compared to your experiences in school?

What were some challenges for you during this program?

What would you want to change in the program for future participants?

Secondary questions:

Could you tell me more about that?

What do you mean when you say ____ ?

How did that feel?

Tell me about times where you have had similar experiences?

All interviews were videotaped and transcribed by the author.

Analysis

Relevant secondary material and quotes from the interviews containing biographical information was used to give detailed descriptions of the backgrounds of each program participant to provide clear case examples of the life situations of

marginalized and street-involved youth. Next, secondary data such as attendance records, final program evaluations, participant observations, along with quotes from the participant interviews, was used to give descriptions of the general degree of positive engagement by which youth participated in the program. These descriptions are found in the “Program/Youth Outcomes: General Perceptions” section of the findings. For the analysis of this section, regular attendance, co-operative behaviour, statements of appreciation, youth acknowledgment that the program met certain self-identified needs and expressions of positive emotion toward the program were all taken as evidence of positive engagement. Irregular attendance, un-cooperative or increasingly anti-social behaviour, statements of dislike and expressions of negative emotion related to program participation, were all taken as evidence of experiences of negative engagement in the program. The evidence used to make distinctions between positive and negative engagement follows the system’s theory understanding of motivation and elements affecting social cooperation (social-integration). Finally, to analyze youth experiences of the program that motivated their positive or negative engagement, a thematic analysis of transcribed interviews was undertaken. This analysis, found in the “Experiences of engagement” section of the findings, followed an interpretive hermeneutic approach where the researcher moved dialogically between the youth voices and the integral systems theory perspective to generate themes that related youth subjective experience to contextual elements of the program.

Findings

Study Participant Backgrounds

The participants selected for this case study, were three youth who fit the profile of being school aged, not participating in the public education system and having histories of marginalization and/or street involvement. A descriptive profile of each youth is given to demonstrate their unique situation in life and to provide biographical context for their experiences of engagement. The backgrounds of the three study participants are as follows:

Participant One (P1) Participant One was 16 years old when he entered the Apprenticeship Skills Program. This youth had initially left school at age 13 because of bullying, a sense of not belonging, and general disinterest with the curriculum. During his school experience, this youth was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. During the period after he left school this youth became involved in the criminal justice system and started living in and out of his mother's and step father's place, intermittently living on the streets and in foster care. The youth's biological father had left the family when he was young. This youth was in and out of alternative education programs and probation day programs over the 3 years he had left the regular education stream. At the time of his enrolment into the Apprenticeship Skills program the youth was still on probation, not attending any school or program and was living in foster care because of conflict with his mother and stepfather.

P1: "I don't know, I've pretty much been on my own for the past four years, and even though I have been in foster homes and stuff, they don't really care for you like a real

family should, so I've pretty much been out on my own since I was like 12, I've had to be like out on the streets homeless a couple of times.... Well in middle school in grade seven I didn't like the school I was at, I didn't fit in with any of the kids. None of them were like violent or anything, I just didn't fit in. I really felt like an outcast at the school so I picked up a metal pipe and I finally threw it through a window and like got expelled for that. Then I went to another middle school, _____, and I ended up getting kicked out of there to. I liked going to _____, because I got along with a lot of the kids and the teacher was really nice but then again I just felt like it was all really pointless and I would get really angry and just sit there and just listen to music instead of actually working... Then I went to an alternative school and it just wasn't good at all, I was court ordered to be there and the kids that were at that school would like beat me up and take my stuff and I was like court ordered to be there. I like tried telling my P.O., you know like this is going on and he didn't do anything about it. He didn't move me schools, he didn't up that order, he just said I have to go, its court ordered. So I would have to go to school or I would have to go to youth custody kind of thing. I didn't want to go to youth custody, so I will go to this place where I get beat up and like picked on...the teachers were telling me I wasn't doing well in school so, to me to be in a place where I am not happy, I am not learning anything and they are telling me I'm not doing good and the kids are beating me up, I was just like whatever, I just don't want even to do school right now. To me just like going would be doing well. Even just showing up would be good, but no, they were like no you have to do this and its like O.K. but if I don't do it in enough time they were like you need to be doing it faster and its just like reading a book and then writing down what happened in the book. Its like why do I have to do that, it was really pointless it felt to me. So I eventually managed to leave.”

Participant Two (P2) Participant two was 17 when he was enrolled in the program. This youth had left school around the age of 14, for self-reported reasons of bullying, substance use, troubles at home with abusive boyfriends of his mother, lack of support at home, and falling behind with school work. This youth was diagnosed with ADHD, and was challenged with substance use issues. At the time of enrolment into the Apprenticeship Skills Program this youth was living in a supportive recovery home to help with his substance abuse.

P2: “Well, my family background wasn’t the best, I’ve had bad dads and stepdads but my mom’s been taking care of me which is good... school is boring and its really institutionalized and its not really interactive, its so like you have to do this a certain way and if you don’t get it then, basically you are going to start falling behind and eventually you will lead to dropping out of school like I did... When I was falling behind I felt hopeless and its like too much pressure and they just keep going on ahead so I finally gave up... the pressure it gets really hard and once there is too much stuff its either you got to fail or do it all again or just stop going to that class... There should be ways for you to catch up faster but there isn’t, you got to go just like everyday... its difficult some days because I am a lazy person so I don’t like getting out of bed... at first I had support but later on it was all on me and I stopped going.”

Participant Three (P3) Participant three was 17 at the time of her enrollment into the Apprenticeship Skills Program. At the beginning of the program this youth was homeless, living in shelters, on friend’s couches and in parks. This youth had left the

public education system at the age of 13 because of disinterest with the curriculum, bullying and problems living with her single mother. During the time this youth left the public education system, she had run away from home and began living on the streets. After a short period of substance abuse, this youth connected with a community associated to the *Food Not Bombs* community kitchens. This youth found much support and inspiration from this community. For a period of a year this youth enrolled into an alternative education program and returned living with her mother. After a year in the program however, she left because of a lack of interest in the curriculum, a sense of not belonging, and the stressors of being homeless again because of having to leave home because of renewed tensions with her mother.

P3: “I kind of had more of a radical thought process and I was sort of radically minded...the reason why I quit school was that half the teachers were supportive of me following my dreams and the other half weren’t supportive at all and wanted to crush my dreams completely. The other reason was personal life made me become homeless and I was tired of shoving my sleeping bag into my locker so I just hit the road. I was in grade nine...I was completely stressed out because of my personal life and the fact that I couldn’t go to school, I was kind of lost and for a while there I was drinking and doing drugs. After that I found this awesome community [*Food not Bombs*] and they were so supportive and so inspiring, these people knew who I was, and I decided to really join it and be a part of something a little better, and it was there where I found my music, found my creativity and found what I was really passionate about and inspired by and sort of found my way. That community was in search of a different life, they knew the way things were going right now wasn’t right and I think they wanted change from something

destructive to something more creative and that was what really inspired me, that there can be change and that people can change this reality that we all live in if they put their minds to it. That was a huge inspiration to me that idea of freedom, true freedom and change...It was really hard for me to find a job, I felt really unmotivated and I really felt that nobody wanted to hire me and there wasn't really many jobs available to me, I tried to you know look proper but all my clothes were ragged and I tried to find a pair of black pants but I felt I always kind of looked a bit off...That was when I was like, I'm not doing anything, this is really stupid, I'm not working, I'm not doing anything so I decided to check in to see if I could get welfare. I couldn't do that, so I decided to go to school. I spent almost a year there, I ended up leaving because I just felt I couldn't do school. I wanted to partake but it just wasn't my style, I felt like being part of that [alternative school] but it made me feel really depressed, like seeing the youth that I was a part of so closed minded... they just knew that they were there to finish school and that was pretty much it and of course there was some fun activities that happened but other than that they just knew that they didn't belong in regular school so they were in that one and I didn't really feel part of that.”

Program/Youth Outcomes: General Perceptions

Through attendance records, final program evaluations, participant observations and participant interviews, all study participants appeared to have been fully engaged in the Apprenticeship Skills program and felt that it had benefited them towards their own personal goals, improved their sense of well-being and confidence in securing future employment. Each youth had an excellent attendance record, missing no more than 2 days each over the entire 4 months. Each youth arrived on time everyday and

participated full heartedly in all aspects of the program for the duration of each day. Although each youth went through intermittent struggles in motivation to participate in various program tasks for small periods of time every couple of weeks, especially when the weather turned cold and wet, for the most part each youth maintained a remarkable degree of enthusiasm towards the program and the activities. All study participants partook in the full variety of program workshops and activities, working hard to install a 6,000sq ft. landscaped food forest, install and maintain 7,000sq ft of vegetable beds, build a series of nursery propagation tables, restore the riparian zone of a drainage canal by planting native plants, and facilitate a fall harvest workshop for a group of home schooled youth. Not only for its educational and skill development value, this work was very valuable to the community agency since over 30,000 dollars of infrastructure and landscape was installed towards the completion the agency's educational garden.

Towards the Apprenticeship Skills Program all youth expressed very strong feelings of connection and felt that it had benefited them in the direction towards their goals. The feelings of connection to the program and the garden are reflected in Participant One's comment: "I love it, I wish I lived there, [The Apprenticeship Skills Program] Represents!" Participant Two, when asked about his general impression said, "I love the program, you should have an extra one because it does open the eyes and you can just look and see what we have done, I love the garden." For Participant Three, relating her experience to a previous experience with a community organization that she had a deep connection with, "[The Apprenticeship Program] was so inspirational, it was like Food Not Bombs, with the same sort of line of community, ummm understanding and intentions and I think that was portrayed throughout the whole program." All these

comments stand in stark contrast to these youth's general perception of school, which tended towards the opposite end of the spectrum with things like "I hated it", "I felt it was pointless," "I didn't want to be there" and "I didn't feel like I belonged."

For Participant One, who had been involved with youth probation, living in a foster care home and looking for a job and something to do, his perception of the benefit of the program towards his sense of agency was expressed as:

P1: "After the garden everyone got put into a job placement where they would work for a company for free while getting paid under the growing skills garden, so it would just be a job experience and I actually got hired through mine and um I've been working there ever since...like I definitely feel proud to be where I am at. When I got that job, the day I started that job, I moved into my first place... I was paying my own rent I went to all the meetings with landlords, like I met one and it was like all on me. I went to work everyday, you know I don't skip work, like I feel, like really responsible and like, I always used to be sketch about what like adult life was going to be and what like I'm going to have to go to work everyday and pay my bills and stuff. But I'm doing it now when I'm sixteen no problem and I know it is going to get harder but like I now feel a whole lot more comfortable going into that stage just from like basically it was the garden that started that all."

For Participant Two who was managing substance abuse issues and started off the program living in a supportive recovery foster home:

P2: “What I took home everyday was the fact that I put in hard work, knowing that we were closer to finishing our goals that we set in the program and that related to my personal life, like, I could actually do things better, like my personal thing....staying clean from drugs and like this program helped me stay clean from drugs because it really helped me take my mind off that stuff...it really did like help me everyday...ya it was pretty focusing, it helped me get through...the routine helped me and that constructive work and the people, and it kept my mind from like going to like thinking about bad things. If I’m structured I’m good and I think [The Apprenticeship Skills Program] can really help people who were in my situation.”

For Participant three who was homeless and felt alienated within the alternative public school system because she felt it wasn’t helping her towards creating positive change, the Apprenticeship Skills Program provided an affirming experience that helped this youth develop the skills she valued while providing the ability through her earnings to secure a more stable housing situation.

“The [Apprenticeship Skills Program] ya ya was totally um more what I was looking for like that change that I knew was needed to happen, it was, it was in the garden. I was seeing it, I was seeing all this change like we were changing it with our own hands. We were changing beds, we were changing the greenhouse from looking like a bunch of moldy tomatoes all squished up against the wall to like this beautiful area where there was a bunch of propagation tables. We turned the whole back area that was all grassy into this beautiful food forest, like I was creating so much change...and I was making money during all of this, it was like a dream come true. The fact that I was

getting paid to learn the things that I wanted to learn really helped me to achieve my own personal goals like getting a place...[Apprenticeship Skill] really encouraged people to discover their own talents and to follow them, like for me for instance, I really discovered that I am good with woodwork.”

Through daily observation and from their own perspective it was clear that each study participant had been very engaged in all aspects of the program and felt that the experience had directly benefited them while developing skills they could use towards future employment. The following section seeks to investigate what aspects of the program allowed for this type of positive engagement which seemed not present in their previous school experiences.

Experiences of Engagement

An analysis of the participants’ descriptions of their experiences revealed strong shared experience of a sense of connectedness to the program, activities, and group members. Words most often used to describe the experience included; feeling part of family or a team and feeling a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment. These feelings of connectedness were impacted by a series of six themes that contributed to the experience’s over-arching theme of positive engagement. An additional seventh theme also emerged but unlike the first six themes seemed to work counter to contributing to the overall sense of connection and positive engagement. Analysis of the participants’ descriptions defined the following themes as those that contributed to their sense of connectedness and impacted their level of engagement in the program in a positive manner: (a) contributing to something of value (b) working in cooperation towards a

shared goal (c) witnessing what you have accomplished (d) having support with material needs (e) being cared for as a person and (f) feeling accepted and inspired by peers. The final theme that seemed to worked against the youth's sense of connection and positive engagement, although having a relatively smaller overall impact was (g) feeling vicarious dis-empowerment.

(a) Contributing to something of value. Each youth developed a sense of pride towards the activities they were engaging in and seemed to identify with the overall purpose of the garden to develop a food producing asset for the community. This identification seemed to give a sense of purpose to their efforts and provided a motivating force to engage. A large dimension to this sense of value was seeing that something tangible and permanent was being left for others to use and enjoy in the future.

P1: "I wasn't just thinking ahhh we are just doing this because we have to or we are getting told to. It's like I wanted to finish because I wanted to see what it would be like. I wanted like that food forest to get built, whether that program is there or not that food forest will be there for ever and that's gonna, I don't know what animals will eat off it or not but I know a lot of people will and its like, that wasn't there when I was there and me and my team, or our team or whatever built that and no body else in the world will be able to say that they built that because we did and that is a good feeling and like tons of people are going to walk through there and its just going to get more awesome every year."

P3: “I think people wanted to finish the projects because it was almost self-gratifying and understanding that it will create something for the future and um it’s like we were mainly focusing on food right and food is a necessity of all of life and that later on [the garden] would supply food for so many people and just the feeling of knowing that we were creating something that will last, you know and will stay there for a long time afterwards.”

The root of this sense of value in the activities of the program seemed to arise from a general sense that the central purpose of the educational exercises, although having personal educational benefit, was not solely for personal achievement or “rehabilitation” but more about supporting the benefit of the community. For the study participants, having direct access to a purpose of contribution seemed to allow access to positive feelings of self-efficacy and capability, feelings that they did not experience a lot in school or even the potential for them because of their difficulty to participate in that context.

P2: “We were building a food forest for generations to come. It’s a fact that you can see what you are doing, I could write stuff down on a paper and get it marked back to me, its like, it’s like it’s just there but when you go in the garden and you plant it and you watch it grow, you can see the fruits of your labour and it’s a beautiful thing to watch a whole food forest come and then people can eat from it and it is good... The cause for the garden was to make it grow for everyone. The only cause for school that I can think of is to graduate and be something for yourself you know, but they say you have to have a grade twelve to do anything which is kind of tough for my situation...”

There were many contextual factors that communicated the purpose and value of the project to the study participants. Firstly, there was the initial program orientation, where potential participants were introduced to the values and community aspirations of the Apprenticeship Skills Program. Secondly, youth were introduced to workshops and presentations by community members on the importance of food security and sustainability during the first month of the program. Thirdly, purpose and value was expressed and reflected upon during group discussions and debriefs. Finally, this value was communicated through direct experiences of the benefits of the projects such as harvesting food from the garden for lunch time meals, witnessing the beauty of completed projects and the gratitude of community members and other youth groups coming to visit the site upon receiving some freshly grown vegetables or seeing the positive changes.

These contextual factors differed from these youth's past experiences in institutional settings, be they regular or alternative schools or drug rehabilitation and youth detention centers. In those settings the purpose that was regularly communicated was individual development, be it through report cards in the achievement of good grades, the achievement of good mental health, the overcoming of personal problems in the achievement of sobriety, positive psychiatric assessments, or privileges and reduced sentencing in the achievement of good behavior. Within the Apprenticeship Skills Program, because the learning objectives were focused on community development rather than individual development, the individual focus was shifted to an external collective measure (food production, landscaping etc.), rather than individualized achievement.

The outcome was a sense of social purpose resulting in motivating or “self-gratifying” (to use P3’s words) feelings of pride and esteem that motivated engagement in the program activities. In addition, simply engaging in these activities may inherently promote positive personal development as a bi-product of fully participating in them. This is reflected in research where the engagement in activities that bring purpose and meaning to a youth’s life has shown to have several positive effects on youth including “prosocial behavior, moral commitment, achievement, and high self-esteem” (Damon, et. al., 2003, p. 120).

(b) Working in cooperation towards a shared goal. All study participants described working in a group and cooperating to achieve a shared goal as a major contributing factor in their motivation to participate and engage in the program activities. The effect of this cooperative group environment allowed for a sense of increased support in problem solving, over-coming challenges and an increased feeling of connection amongst group members.

P1: “Instead of like thirty kids in a class teacher tells them something and then they all do their paper work, at the garden it was like there would be other kids there and we would talk about what we were going to work on and figure out different ways to do it and like communicate and then you learn how to talk with kids and figure out problems instead of just trying to figure out all these problems in your head trying to do it at school. I felt like trying to learn with other kids was good.”

P2: "It was like a family in a way and I thought that was pretty cool. We went there everyday and we got to know each other and we worked hard and eventually they grow on you. The difference between people at school and growing skills we all were close together right, we were a tight working group but at school you sit down at your desk and you get homework and you just have to do it on your own and that is the working environment and it's, I don't like it, like teamwork builds friendship I think. You have to work together you have to rely on that person to help you and it goes both ways. So I think it builds a bond. It added motivation and I think it was pretty helpful because you got a whole bunch of people working for the same cause and there is that drive behind it you know."

P3: "We were basically forced into this own little community and we started to build off each other and I think that is really what community is about, it's about building off each other and realizing that every person is different but we can all work together to build something beautiful...Because we all had a project that we needed to get done and over three months of doing that project we became more of a family and umm more connected and we recognized that that is what community is probably all about... Ya, sometimes we would go through our emotional stuff and we would always have people there to help us and we would always have friends there to help us because we were all kind of in it together because in school everyone is kind of dealing with their own thing, umm they are not willing to support you with your homework because they have their own homework and umm they are not really as willing to support you with your emotional stuff because they are going through emotional stuff too and umm I guess it was different

in the garden, we were all focusing on the same work. It wasn't just like a sole project it was like we were all working on the same projects together.”

For these youth, the environment of the Apprenticeship Skills Program of being placed in a group working towards a shared goal seemed to support the creation of a supportive working environment. A feeling of being supported by your peers has often been demonstrated to support “school connectedness” for marginalized youth, with these youth often reporting that if they are in a class with friends, they are more likely to attend (Smith, 2007a). However, the conditions for the development of a supportive friendship around engagement in the socially valued activities might not be as easily nurtured in a school environment, where there is little direct structural incentive for peers to support peers with work; especially since work for the most part is individualized and individually graded. In a co-operative learning context, it is in the best interest of everyone to support all members of the group to participate well, since it results in more effective attainment of the shared goal. For the study participants who in their past struggled to find co-operative and supportive peer relationships in their learning environments, it appears that an institutional context that sets a co-operative context as opposed to a more individualistic one, may allow for increased positive engagement.

The two themes, “working in cooperation towards a shared goal” and “contributing to something of value”, that had a motivating effect on participation for the youth, seemed to work synergistically together in nurturing a sense of connection and positive engagement through the development of esteem. For the youth it seemed that the interpretation of being depended upon to achieve something of value helped to create an

environment where a direct experience of worth was felt, and nurtured a sense of esteem that motivated continued engagement in that form of participation. This relationship was articulated by Participant Two, who related their experiences in the program to other life situations:

P2: “My mom works 48 hours so she is tired and she doesn’t want to clean so I’m needed to clean and no one likes a messy house. I get thank-yous, you are the best child ever on my facebook wall. I know it helps her out because she doesn’t have the time to do it and when she does she doesn’t want to do it so, its all on me, its like if I can’t help out around, what good am I....She is the main contributor to the house with money, so I do the cleaning. If people are dependent on me it helps me be a team player by like I can’t let them down and I don’t want to let them down and it goes both ways, like you are only as strong as your weakest link, cause if I’m suppose to take dirt to and from a place and I’m slacking off they are going to fall behind because of me so it’s a little motivation to get the job done because they need me to do it....At school, I can’t give you an example, the only one is maybe if I have homework that needs to be handed in, I need to do it and hand it in on time so the teacher can mark it but other than that there is nothing, maybe I’m helping the teachers work a little bit later but that is about it [Laughter].”

Summarized, the interpretation of these youth about being needed to work towards something of collective value is, “I have value, because I am depended upon to contribute to something of value.”

(c) Witnessing what you have accomplished – experiencing product and progress. All youth describe that witnessing what they had created as a result of their efforts as being a major force in motivating their engagement. Elements that contributed to this experience was being able to directly enjoy aspects of the final product, to see progress toward the final goal and being able to better remember what was learnt.

P2: “I find cleaning this room more motivational than doing school work, cause if I clean a room you can see it, if you do school work, its just done, there is nothing really there. Its like vacuuming can be put to anything that you can see the effects of after, its like doing that work and then seeing it is the best thing for me I think, cause there is nothing motivational about sitting in a desk for hours every day you know, I need to get my hands on dirt you know, like just work hard and see what I’ve done. I thought [the garden] was cool because when I put in the work I could see it get done and then I could come back time after time and watch it grow.”

P3: “Well I guess we had like so many people that we’re into seeing something through to the end, that I don’t think anybody would really want to drop out of it ummm so everybody was just working towards getting the food forest done or you know um the first project actually is what was the pinnacle of all projects even though it was such a small project we were just doing cardboard and mulching and after we saw that through to the end it was only like a couple of days and when it was finished and complete everybody felt so satisfied and so relieved that it was done. And they could see it and I think everybody just wanted to do more projects like that and then we did more like the food forest and the plantings I think people just really enjoyed seeing it through to the

end. The first project like I said definitely brought people to an understanding that oh ya we can finish this, we can see it through because when you finish something, finish a project for your first time, its like so gratifying on so many levels that I can't even describe, its like understanding that your hands are these tools and they can really make anything happen.”

Tasks and projects within the garden supported these experiences of witnessing because their concrete nature allowed for a direct experience of working towards a desired end. Along with the more complex tasks such as constructing heated propagation tables or installing a landscape design, even simple tasks such as weeding a garden bed or pick-axing the removal of a large embankment (a favorite of Participant Two), seemed to carry this experience of progress. In addition, all tasks were modular in nature in that they were each a project in themselves, and were also a contributing step towards the overall completion of the project and goal of creating the educational market garden. It seemed that the diversity of tasks and their modular nature allowed everyone access to experiencing progress because there was always something that could be completed regardless of time and ability. This access to witnessing progress, especially in the context of a group, seemed to spur along participation by stimulating empowering feelings of gratification and satisfaction that had a reinforcing effect in attracting the youth in engaging more and more in activities, and activities they were beginning to trust would created these desirable feelings and interpretations once finished.

Finally, the motivational aspects of “witnessing what you have accomplished” also seemed to result from the youth’s experience that the learning that occurred through

the “hands on” engagement in the activities seemed to be more deeply anchored in their memory and in improved ability. This seemed to provide these youth a sense of greater meaning in the utility of the activities they were being asked to engage in.

P1: “Its like you can read about how a plant grows but until you actually put the seed into the ground and like water it and see it grow kind of thing then you kind of learn about what plants can be put beside each other, what you need to build to make sure they don’t die in the winter. I mean you kinda will know all that stuff by common sense but until you actually do it you don’t really, its kind of like you need experience at it.”

P3: “It was hard for me to really complete assignments and sit in a classroom like I can’t learn that way. I can’t learn in a classroom. I have to learn hands on or else nothing will stick and um that was one thing that was super awesome about what we were learning and how we were learning in the garden.”

In sum, it seemed that engaging in project-based activities that involved the concrete production of something of more direct value promoted the positive engagement of the study participants. Elements from the learning context that promoted this type of engagement were the work’s experiential nature directly applying knowledge into production, the directness of the experience to the work’s results and its physicality. These elements stand in contrast compared to the more abstracted, sedentary, mental and consumptive nature of the work involved in the majority of highschoools especially within alternative programs where learning is accomplished through the completion of “work-books” which have very little intrinsic value once filled out. The more consumptive and

less immediately productive nature of high-school is reflective of a deeper perception of youth as productive members of society *in waiting*, as opposed to members already well capable of meaningful contribution (Burman, 2008). A shift in perspective from consumption to production, representative of the approach taken by the Apprenticeship Skills Program, reduces the latency period between abstracted knowledge and application, allowing for a more immediate feedback loop between understanding the skills and knowledges and applying them towards a productive end. This more immediate feedback loop between knowing and doing, at least for youth that struggle with more abstracted learning, may have the effect of more effectively engaging the nervous system resulting in better memory retention and increased attention in maintaining focus on the task at hand. This seemed especially apparent for the two youth that had diagnosis for ADHD, who reported being able to stay more focused on the projects in the garden than at school. Closely related, the context of the Apprenticeship Skills Program's project based learning carried with it a very physical element to the activities. It is well known that exercise improves positive affect through stimulating the body's physiology along with improving memory retention (Deslandes et. al., 2009) and thus learning activities that more fully engage the physical body may enhance positive participation as the reports of these youth seem to suggest.

(d) Having support with material needs. As previously mentioned, money and pay are a large part of how our culture communicates value. This element of value was recognized by the youth as helping support their participation, for it helped them secure their material needs, and made them feel that their work was of value to others.

P3: “It helps so much to be paid while I’m learning because I can work harder and really realize that it’s ummm worthwhile and it just helps so much, especially for myself who um is in the low income bracket and I need to support myself.”

P2: “I have rent to pay to so it helped being paid but it’s not everything. I think that it is more incentive to go like it is the same thing for families that pay for student’s to get A’s. You get money for it so they are going to put in the work, getting some sort of incentive to go to school would be so much better.”

(e) Being cared for as a person. As already well established in the literature, study participants found that having relationships with the adult facilitators where they felt cared for as people and not just for their ability to participate was important for their engagement (Smith, 2007a; Resnick et.al., 1993; Resnick et. al., 1997). Youth found this type of relationship beneficial for engaging in the activities not only in supporting their engagement within the content of the activities but also in its effect of supporting the cohesion and support amongst peers and helping youth with challenges they faced in their personal lives.

P1: “I feel like learning is better if there is a relationship and not just being told what to do. You guys were good because instead of just telling us what to do like, “go dig this,” you also like had a relationship with everybody there and would ask, “oh what happened with you last night, oh what are you going to do on the weekend kind of like,” you are actually kind of interested in what is going on in our lives. At school the teachers can

say, oh how are you doing? But they are not actually saying *how are you doing?* They are saying it just kind of like because they need to, I think.

This sense of being cared for was experienced because they believed the program facilitators had a personal interest in their well-being. This allowed for the development of a mutual sense of respect and support to develop which seemed necessary to maintain the feelings of the youth's trust. This, in turn, affected them because they could follow direction and take guidance without much reservation or resistance. This trust was felt by both participants and instructors as a much more cooperative working relationship where descriptions by participants of the group as being a "family" or a "team" always included the facilitators. Said another way by Participant Two, "It was like, you guys showed us respect, so we were respectful back." All participating youth had a history of conflict with adults in authority roles and maintaining a feeling of support and respect as the underlying context for what was being taught and for any direction given was very important. The effect of this caring approach was also recognized as having a supportive effect in supporting harmonious relationships amongst peers.

P1: "[the program] was just happy like, I don't remember anyone fighting. At school there is always like cliques and people judging people and singling people out, [at the garden] it was just one big happy family.... It was a really chill spot, I think one of the times, one of the girls that was there was like kind of upset and like we were all working and then she kind of stormed off and then you dropped whatever you were doing and went to go talk to her and kind of see what was up. So I think that maybe if you didn't do that she would have just been mad and maybe came back and yelled or like made it a

bigger issue but I think you were there to be like ,“Its O.K. What’s up?, talk to me” kind of deal. I don’t remember seeing any of that at school.”

The effects of the supportive caring approach in promoting engagement was also experienced by Participant Two, who felt support in understanding their relationship to addictive substances and how to manage them. This youth, whose substance use had become a barrier to his school participation, was surprised that facilitators were willing to work with his patterns within the program and figure out solutions that would not only allow him to continue participating but also to overcome their personal challenges.

P2: “I don’t like asking people for help or I don’t like coming to people with my problems. I like to wait for them to see and come to me and say ‘Oh hey ----- what’s wrong?’, so I would just go to work and then I would get tempted, I’d be like, “Im going to go to the bathroom,” and umm you know... I thought I was going to get in really big trouble for slipping up cause I was getting kinda bold with it, I was like whatever, I’m going to do it and I have to get caught to be able to help me stop. I had a talk with [one of the program facilitators] because she knew but I didn’t want to say, so I appreciated it. That talk really started to make me think, its like why am I here and why am I living there [supportive recovery] if I’m doing this. After she talked to me about that and after we talked things over with [my supportive recovery worker] I really thought long and hard about doing that and then I actually tried and then I slipped up later but ever since then I stopped doing it.”

Outside of the more relationally focused caring approach taken by the facilitators, a large contributor to the context of the youth feeling cared for was the duration of the day they spent with the facilitators, and the ratio of facilitators to participants. The time spent was much longer and the ratio of staff to youth was much smaller than that found in the classroom, allowing for a much greater percentage of time the facilitators had in direct contact with the youth compared to a school teacher. This structural feature may play a role in supporting the relationship building process by virtue of time spent in direct contact. As Participant Two put it in an earlier quote “It was like a family in a way and I thought that was pretty cool. We went there everyday and we got to know each other and we worked hard and eventually they grow on you.” In addition, the specialization of instruction by academic subject, the more rigid societal interpretation of what the “student” and “teacher” relationship should look like, and the narrowness of activities the traditional “student/teacher” relationship engage in (ie. instruction only, not activities of daily living such as eating and relaxing) may also slow the development of a caring relationship. This is because it is much more uni-dimensional and does not allow many opportunities for both the student and teacher to see each other outside of defined roles as people sharing similar needs.

(f) Feeling accepted and inspired by peers. All study participants described how the supportive, fun and interesting relationships with the other members of the group also kept them engaged and motivated to participate. The study participants experienced that peer relationships did not carry the same kind of negative exclusion that they experienced in school but instead relationships developed within the program that supported the unique expression of these youth and allowed for the exploration of different ways of

being. One element supporting this sense of connection and support from peers was that study participants did not feel as if they were being judged negatively as a result of their past.

P2: “It’s the people that made me keep going back, they didn’t know me and they didn’t take my past into consideration to judge who I am as a person cause everyone, or some people like to think of me as what I was....I felt more respect in the [Apprenticeship Skills Program] than I did in school, people get judged in school from their teachers and the principals from their records they look at them and the kids they judge from what they know or what they have heard about and people from the garden they didn’t know nothing and they treated me like any normal person because they didn’t know about my old reputation that still follows me which is pretty annoying...ya cause they don’t know so I could just be myself and then it was like care free, its like no-one is going to be like, “Ha you make bad joke”’s or, “you can’t rap,” you know, its not like that. This group was easier to relax with.”

Another element of this sense of support and connection was the other group members, who brought with them a shared diversity of new enriching perspectives and experiences which opened up new positive opportunities and ways of expression for the study participants.

P1: “Honestly a big part of it was just like the kids who were there.. you guys did like an amazing job picking the kids for that it was like everyone got along so good everyone was so chill and like understood everything that I said and like gave me such good advice

and it was like awesome... they definitely had a lot of stories like they have all been traveling a lot of places and they've done a lot of stuff and like I never really thought a lot before about traveling or like playing a banjo on the side of the road not for money just doing that kind of stuff and that's awesome. I felt like I had no experience and all these people did and so I wanted to, I was eager to learn quickly so that I could be a part, when they were all talking about music I could get into that but then when they would talk about different plants and stuff I would kind of like be lost so like I wanted to learn quickly so that I could talk with them and stuff. Sarah [names changed to protect anonymity] taught me about like all these different plants you can use for medicine, Annalise taught me about like different chakras of your body and Jeff taught me a lot about music. I definitely want to get more into music that was a big one. Like I jammed with Jeff and Nate at Nate's house one time. We were just having a get together and then they are all playing instruments and stuff and I've never played the drums in my life, ever, and then like I picked up the drum sticks and we played like for thirty minutes, song after song and other people had different instruments and after we were done Jeff was like, "Dude, you should seriously start a career in drumming," and I was like "Wow." But just jamming I must have looked like an idiot cause I had such a big smile on my face the whole time, I was so stoked."

The mixed ages of the peers from 16 up to 30 may have contributed in large part to these experiences. For the older youth, it was clear that some of the study participants (Participants One and Two) struggled in some social situations and were at times caught up in an unhealthier more anti-social pop culture of consumption and gangster rap. Because of the extra maturity that the age differences brought, the center of gravity of the

group was above the unhealthier habits of these youth. This created a much different peer context for the study participant youth to participate in which allowed for them to leave behind unhelpful aspects of their old identity and aspire towards the more socially positive qualities and attitudes they found themselves surrounded by. As pointed out by Participant Two, the mixed ages of the participants also freed study youth from being identified by the negative attitudes and behaviours of their histories that they were trying to move away from. This is because these aspects were not as easily engaged with by individuals outside of the study participant's same aged school cohort of youth from similar backgrounds, since little similarity to mutually identify around these unhealthier patterns existed.

As expressed by Participant One, the greater life experience of the peers in the program also exposed this youth to some new life-enhancing skills and activities not directly taught in the program. Also very important, this youth observed that participating in an older more experienced peer group, interested in learning the skills of the tasks at hand, further increased this youth's motivation to pay attention to learn the skills being taught in order to fit in. This motivational effect may be present within same aged peers at the outset of their school experience, before experiences of failure lead to the development of resistance in those struggling to achieve. However once this resistance has developed, for youth that have a history of struggling to achieve academically or with any skill development, being visibly younger than one's peers and it naturally being seen as acceptable to be less competent, may take the pressure of expectation off of the learning process and thus open up the space to re-engage. This situation may have contributed to the experience of Participant Two of not having any feelings of resistance

to the skill development, and having only motivation to engage, despite their history of struggle in the school system.

(g) Feeling vicarious dis-empowerment. Despite providing a more unique educational context through intentionally removing some of the structural elements found in the traditional school environment, a few experiences of the youth pointed to some structural elements that could be improved to even better support their engagement in the experience. Although each youth reported feeling listened to and very connected to the program, at times during the program each youth did report that the facilitators were not as present, responsive and open as they normally were. This was debriefed with the youth during morning check-ins because it reflected an underlying tension that was playing itself out in the organization of the community agency that was administering the Apprenticeship Skills Program. This tension appeared to have a direct impact on the program's delivery. Participant Three spoke about her experience with these tensions, and the impact and potential structural/contextual elements of the program that contributed to them.

P3: "Like sure we did a bunch and it was huge and inspiring but I wish it was on a different piece of land and you guys [program facilitators] could have done it just solely you.... if you guys were the heads it would have been so much more than what it was but because there was like those heads over your shoulders we could see that in the morning sometimes [co-instructors name] would be really stressed out because there was this intense meeting or like umm you would be really stressed out cause you just heard they wanted to stop the program like step on what was really great and oppress any sort of

ideas or thoughtful input and it was crazy just because like I think if it was on a different piece of land and if it wasn't the [community agency] and just you guys it could have been so much bigger and so much better because like there was always those higher figures staring down at us you know and that is what made me feel the most uncomfortable and it probably made you feel uncomfortable.”

As expressed in the experience of the Participant Three, the facilitators at times were noticeably pre-occupied, anxious and frustrated with changes being made at the administrative level of the organization that affected the program. The changes that were occurring within the community agency were in large part the result of the increased presence of a new executive director in the organization. Compared to the previous director that took an extremely hands off approach to how programs were run and left decision making to be made much more collaboratively between the program manager and facilitators, the new executive director had a much more conservative and managerial approach. This change in leadership lead to a more supervisory and top-down method of administration. This change lead to decisions being made and policies set without an open dialogue with frontline staff and the closer scrutiny of staff to ensure they were performing to the standards that were being outlined for them. As a result, the program facilitators, along with middle management, lost a large amount of autonomy and decision making power, and felt continually under audit and on edge of something going wrong. This reaction of fear and unease at times affected the facilitator relationships with the program participants because this reaction seemed to move them into taking on a more authoritative, managerial and disciplinary role themselves, which was counter to the program's philosophy. The pressure to assume this orientation seemed to stem out of an

anxiety to avoid reprimand by ensuring participant behavior did not draw any unwanted attention. This transference effect within more top-down supervisory approaches has been observed by other researchers and labeled as the “hegemony of hierarchies” (Fairtlough, 2005)

Frontline staff and managers also reacted to the more top-down managerial approach adopted by the organization by becoming less attached to the program and taking less initiative and personal responsibility for it because they felt they had little control over the final outcome and how their efforts may be directed. This type of reaction associated to feelings of disempowerment has been observed by other researchers investigating the effects of more managerial and supervisory organizational practices on teachers and other individuals working in “top-down” administrative environments (Ingersoll, 2003; Fairtlough, 2005; Spreitzer, 1996). This feeling of disempowerment at times made it difficult for the program instructors to emotionally role model the initiative and self-responsibility they wished to engender in the participating youth. From youth feedback during debriefs, it was apparent that they had noticed the periodic changes in facilitator engagement and affect and that this “vibe” when it occurred created a sense of unease that interfered with the “vibe” of collaboration and empowerment that for the most part was being cultivated.

It is very important for the author who was deeply connected to the Apprenticeship Skills Program and the community youth agency to acknowledge the organic (constantly changing as people come and go) nature of pilot programs and charity organizations/directors/boards, etc., because not approaching these realities with grace

and understanding can lead to a tone of unproductive criticism. One needs to accept that there is constant change occurring, acknowledge the good intentions that exist in all perspectives and with a grateful heart focus on aspects that can be improved upon. The purpose of relating these experiences of the community agency's organizational changes is to draw attention to the effects on interpersonal relationships and emotions between frontline staff and participants that practices at the administrative level of programs can have on youth engagement. Although the youth participant's experience of "(g) *Feeling vicarious dis-empowerment*" did not have as significant of an impact compared to the other positive experiences, the effects of this negative experience over a longer term program could have had a much larger effect on their engagement. From this perspective, this experience of "(g) *Feeling vicarious dis-empowerment*" deserves some noteworthy attention and analysis in the discussion since addressing it leads to some very interesting potential improvements in the design of future programs.

DISCUSSION

The results of this case study suggest that the design recommendations for alternative education programs which have been informed by an integral systems approach may be useful in supporting those adolescents experiencing marginalization and/street-involvement that have left the public education system. Study participants demonstrated a high degree of engagement and connection to the program, as understood from both self-reports and observations by the researcher. The program's outcomes included increased social competency, increased competency in immediately employable skills, increased self-esteem, reduced engagement in risk prone behaviour, in addition to the production of valuable community assets. Given these outcomes there is merit to reviewing the experiences of these youth, and the context of their participation, in order to further pursue the benefits of this type of educational engagement.

From the investigation of the study participant's perspectives seven experiences were identified as impacting the degree of their engagement. The first six of these experiences influenced their engagement in a positive manner, and were attributable to the integral design recommendations intentionally implemented in the practices of the Apprenticeship Skills Program. These six experiences included: *(a) contributing to something of value, (b) working in cooperation towards a shared goal, (c) witnessing what you have accomplished, (d) having support with material needs, (e) being cared for as a person, and (f) feeling accepted and inspired by peers*. These first six experiences are what contributed to the very positive sense of connection these youth felt toward the program and the benefits they reported experiencing. The final experience, *(g) feeling*

vicarious dis-empowerment, had a negative impact on the study participant's engagement in the Apprenticeship Skills program. As mentioned above, although it did not have as significant of an impact compared to the other positive experiences, the effects on youth engagement of this type of negative experience over a longer term program would be much larger and thus a significant part of this discussion will explore how this can be addressed in the design of future programs.

Impact of Integral Design Recommendations on Youth Experience of Engagement

The six experiences that had a positive impact on the engagement of the study participant youth were clearly consistent with the integral design recommendations. The first four experiences: (a) contributing to something of value, (b) working in cooperation towards a shared goal (c) having support with material needs and (d) witnessing what you have accomplished, are attributable to the first design recommendation:

Skill development through active direct participation in valued contribution to the community where options for participation are broad enough that:

- i) All youth can be successful in being seen and seeing themselves as valued contributors. (Access to societal exchanges of esteem)*
- ii) Participation does not obstruct the maintenance of their other fundamental exchanges (non-obstructive access to this exchange of esteem)*

Participant youth clearly identified with the social value of building an asset for the community, and especially an asset that contributes to localized food production.

This identification can be in part attributable to being exposed to and appreciating larger social ideals; however, the direct experience of a valued product such as eating fresh vegetables from the garden, the appreciation from community members, and the direct experience of the aesthetic beauty and change they were creating seemed to have had the largest impact. Although Permaculture projects are an excellent environment for these experiences, the positive identification with things of direct community value suggests that any endeavors that have identified value for both the youth and community, where all youth can engage collaboratively in a group towards the accomplishment of a project, and are able to witness some type of useful product from their efforts, is a large motivating force in keeping them focused on the learning activities. An interesting example where these principles were applied in another learning context, was a program in Vancouver where marginalized and street-involved youth were engaged as community based researchers to investigate youth intravenous drug use, and create health promotion materials such as video around emerging themes (Coser, 2011). Analysis of the youth researcher's experience from this program demonstrated that, just like the Apprenticeship Skills program, what kept the youth engaged were the positive feelings associated with acceptance, pride, purpose and feeling needed that were achieved through contributing to the project. In both of these programs the positive feelings from engaging in valued social participation reflects the integral theory assertion that individuals inherently want to feel part of a community and when provided the opportunity to engage in relationships where they can feel a part of, and contribute meaningfully, they do so because it stimulates the positive feelings associated to belongingness and esteem. In addition, as highlighted in this research as well as the intravenous drug use project, being provided a wage is also important for keeping marginalized and street-involved youth engaged. This is because it

is a clear societal expression that their efforts are valued and most importantly allows these youth to attend to their living needs while still engaging in educational activities that will increase their chances of employability later in the larger labor market.

The fifth experience that had a positive impact on the engagement of study participant youth was (e) being cared for as a person. This experience is attributable to the second integral design recommendation: *Caring Adults/Reflective Facilitation*. The orientation of the facilitators to actively solicit and engage with the youth's perspective on most matters, and attend to their emotional context both individually and in groups, had the effect of study participant youth feeling respected, listened to and valued. As reported through the experiences of the study participants, this type of orientation allowed for an increase in engagement because it did not trigger the youth's historic resistance to authority; it supported them with challenges outside of the program's context which affected their participation; and it mediated potentially divisive tensions between participants who were still developing the skills to manage on their own.

Although facilitators still directed the activities and skill development, the teaching approach of engaging the perspectives of the youth is a more youth centered and collaborative/democratic style. The effectiveness of this approach in supporting engagement of youth has been documented extensively in the contexts of education, youth care and counseling (Cruz and Stagnitti, 2008; Hatt, 2007; Johnson and Johnson, 2009; Madsen, 1999; Tudor and Worrall, 2006). In relation to the integral framework, this caring, youth centered approach of reflective facilitation that engages the perspective of the youth seems to support a context for marginalized and street-involved youth that

allows for the positive feelings associated to the fundamental relational exchanges of security, control and belongingness.

The last experience that had a positive impact on the engagement of the study participant youth was (e) *feeling accepted and inspired by peers*. This experience could also be in large part attributable to the last integral design recommendation, “*Mixed aged peer group from diverse backgrounds.*” In this study, the three participants were placed with 10 other individuals ranging from ages of 20-65 years (7 other participants and 3 volunteers) from a variety of backgrounds and in a context where the individuals were brought together; not to be rehabilitated to a normalized standard, but to learn skills while working together to accomplish a valued set of tasks. As reflected in their experiences, as a result of not seeing themselves solely surrounded by other disenfranchised youth, study participants were more easily freed from previously negative identities and had the space to create themselves based on their interests and strengths. An element that also seemed to facilitate this was that because the rest of the participants in the Apprenticeship program were older and had more life experiences, their added maturity created an environment of intergenerational mentoring. This not only created an atmosphere of supportive understanding around more immature behaviors, it also had an inspirational effect on the study participants. This inspiration came as these youth were being exposed and included in activities and discussions by their peers that brought in new and exciting experiences and thoughts not readily available to them within their same aged cohorts. For example, one of the study participants had the opportunity to perform some rap he had written in a hip/hop show that one of the older participants had helped to organize. This experience had a very big effect on this youth’s confidence but also his interest in

music and performance. In this way, there is good evidence to suggest that a diversity of backgrounds and ages mixed together with marginalized and street-involved youth expands the resources accessible to them in which to develop sustainable relational exchanges of belongingness, esteem and autonomy, much more so than in groups of peers challenged by similar life circumstances. Other researchers have observed similar positive effects where opportunities for intergenerational mentorship for marginalized youth exist (VanderVen, 2004).

The seventh experience, *(g) feeling vicarious dis-empowerment*, which had a negative impact on the participating youth's engagement has interesting implications for the design of alternative education programs because it moves from the immediate face to face context of the program to the design of practices in the social organizational structures that administrate it. The participants experienced this vicarious dis-empowerment as a disconnection in their relationship with the program facilitators. On one hand, facilitators worked intentionally to build an atmosphere of possibility and inclusion by being very open and nurturing of the participant's ideas, initiative, and active contribution to the group's process. However, at points in the program this orientation waned when instructors became emotionally preoccupied because of their reactions to changes that were being made to the program and its future, without their input. As mentioned earlier, facilitators reacted to these changes with alienated feelings of disempowerment and became less connected to the program because they felt excluded from the decision making process that was leading to changes that directly impacted their experience. As a consequence the facilitators became less effective in emotionally role-modeling the initiative, self-responsibility and positive engagement for the youth and

providing a positive empowered environment for participation. In addition, following what has been observed to occur with frontline workers operating within similar administrative contexts (Fairtlough, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Spreitzer, 1996), the facilitator's reactions to the more managerial and supervisory style of the new administration also had an effect of the facilitators moving into a more supervisory and disciplinary roles themselves which was counter to the program's philosophy.

What the youth's experience of "*(f) feeling vicarious disempowerment*" points to is that no program is an island and thus is always subject to influences of the administrative practices of the organizational structures it exists within. The design of the organizational structure of the community agency within which the Apprenticeship Skills Program was offered through is a non-profit charity model, where a board of directors recruits and hires an executive director and is not legally required to seek input from the organization's managers, frontline staff, and community stakeholders. Within a non-profit charity it is the board of directors and executive director who set policy, standards of practice and appoint one another and they do not have any legal requirement to consult or be held accountable to other sources other than provincial and federal laws. This organizational structure is very similar to a hierarchical top down military, corporate, or bureaucratic model and the same general administrative approach which lead to the over-privileging of 19th century middle class values in the design of the public education system as outlined in the socio-historical analysis of the theoretical review in Part One of this research. What this administrative structure is vulnerable to, because the board and executive director hold the entire decision making power, including the ability to appoint one another, is dissociation from the needs and perspectives of the participants

and frontline staff providing the services in the local context of practice. What makes non-profit charities vulnerable to this dissociation is the insularity of the board and executive director. This can be especially true, when the organization gets to a size that requires several tiers of coordinating management such as the community agency of the case study and face to face interactions between all the organization's members become less frequent. This insularity of the board and executive director can be problematic because there is no direct structural mechanisms such as a legal responsibility through required organizational communicative processes that holds these individuals directly accountable to taking into account the interests of all the stakeholders and the inclusion in decision making of the valuable information about the local context of practice their perspectives contain. This creates a less stable situation in insuring that important information about the local context of practice is included for the broadest decision making perspective available since the collaborative input from all relevant parties necessary for this becomes person dependent and not an agreed upon organizational strategy held in the collective memory of the agency's constitution.

For example, for the particular community agency administering the Apprenticeship Skills Program, the board had become primarily composed of individuals from the corporate financial sector, legal profession and the police department with very little representation from fields involved in the provision of child and youth care and community development. This board composition was the result of the previous executive director who, although being a seasoned youth care worker that founded the organization, was not as experienced in financial and legal matters and realized that he needed extra support. Although potentially balanced by the perspective of the old

executive director, in these types of boards where financial and legal perspectives can naturally become the main focus as a result of the expertise of the members, decision making can become narrowly focused on public perception, perception of funders and liability considerations. These are all in themselves very important perspectives, however, without direct and continual feedback from middle management, staff and participants, valuable information is lost about the local context of practice and the needs of frontline staff and youth in order to provide a high quality of care and positive engagement in the work. Some of these needs as outlined in the integral systems perspective of human development are those associated to the relational exchanges of control and autonomy. When organizational scaffolding to insure that members of a social group's voices are being heard and considered is not present, these exchanges can become obstructed and the negative emotions associated with this obstruction that detract from cooperation and positive engagement begin to emerge in the interactions of those experiencing the marginalization. This ultimately compromises the group's ability to accomplish its intended purpose.

From this point of view, as suggested by Fairtlough (2005), what "*g) feeling vicarious disempowerment*" may point toward is that some pressures towards relationship roles of Authority/subordinate that are obstructive to the relational exchanges of control and autonomy may be endemic to top-down organizational structures such as the non-profit charity structure of the administering community agency. In the case of the Apprenticeship Skills Program, if the institutional structure of the organization sets individual relationships up into roles more reflective of authority/subordinate such as with teacher/student, boss/laborer, supervisor/front-line worker and psychologist/client,

and not as people working together towards shared needs, the structuring patterns make it more difficult to sustain collaborative and empowering relationships that do not obstruct the relational exchanges needed for healthy youth development.

Even with the most collaborative of leadership, the organizational structures of youth charities and the bureaucracies of the public education system may be too confined by traditional conceptions of “education” and “rehabilitation” embedded in the laws of even larger social structures to effectively adapt to and accommodate more progressive practices needed for the positive engagement of marginalized and street-involved youth. Three decisions made by the administration of the community organization that were in conflict with the Apprenticeship Skills Program’s agenda and values illustrate this point. The first was to stop the participation of two adult volunteers because they had criminal records from their youth (none vulnerable sector related) but whom were intentionally selected for the program because of their past marginalization as youth (which resulted in their records) and their successful maturation into healthy adults with a strong resume of youth mentorship, ability to relate to marginalized youth, community contribution and applied skills. The second, was the decision to not allow any sale of produce from the garden to the public and the third, was to discontinue the program after the pilot despite its clear success from the point of view of middle management, front-line staff, youth referral agencies, participants and the government funding agency. The general reasons given for these decisions after they were made was that the presence of a criminal record, the sale of produce, the participation of individuals over the age of 18 and the program’s focus on agriculture and natural restoration was not within the mandate and liability of the community agency. These concerns may accurately reflect how these organizations

are socially defined in public perception and in law with such things as liability which may legitimately make the adoption of more progressive practices in engaging and supporting marginalized and street-involved youth too difficult because of the threat of taking on too much legal risk. This potentially intrinsic lack of ability to adapt to and accommodate progressive practices because of how these organizations are socially defined, exacerbated by their top down nature which can limit the necessary transformative dialogue, might naturally lead to the rejection of progressive approaches as was observed in the case of the Apprenticeship Skills Program. Regardless, both the issues of an organizational structure's ability of maintaining an environment of empowerment *and* its ability both legally and public perception wise to accommodate progressive approaches should be addressed. For these reasons, for a complete exploration into the design of alternative education programs whose practices are effective in supporting the positive engagement of marginalized and street involved youth, this discussion will end with an investigation into a potential alternative organizational structure to the non-profit charity and bureaucratic public education system models.

Social Cooperative Organizational Structures, Social Farming and RCLDs

For the issue of maintaining an environment of empowerment, organizational structures useful in administering alternative programs for marginalized and street involved youth that may be more effective in facilitating the dialogue required for the collaborative relationships needed to nurture relational exchanges of control and autonomy, are those designed according to the basic democratic principles of popular control and political equality (IPU, 1997; Landman, 2011). Popular control uses the

approach that the members of the group itself should control the rules and laws determining how the group is organized. Political equality states that the will of each individual member of a group should be given equal consideration in the group's decision making (Landman, 2011). Processes designed by these principles foster dialogue between group members to identify where their interests and needs overlap. These processes can be at the level of small groups such as with consensus decision making or at the scale of nations with parliamentary systems. Whatever the scale however, the dialogue of mutual need is fostered because these processes hold individuals accountable to one another in ensuring that each other's perspective is heard.

Cooperatives are democratic organizational structures that operate at the scale of communities and may be a very useful model from which to design the organizational context from which to administer alternative education programs meant to serve the social inclusion of marginalized and street-involved youth. Co-operatives are generally defined as “autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (Macpherson, 1995). These organizations maintain the dialogue of accountability and distribution of power from the top-down and the bottom up, by providing all members of the organization control over governing policies through democratic mechanisms that allow them to choose for themselves their managing executors and participate in policy development and organizational direction. Cooperatives are applicable to all realms of activity within a community such as banking, retail, manufacturing, social services, and so on. Social cooperatives, or *Community Service Cooperatives* as they are called in British Columbia (Statutes of British

Columbia, 2012), are the application of participatory democratic organizational models for not-for profit community service agencies, and are the model most relevant in this discussion for the provision of alternative education programs.

Social cooperatives are legally defined as organizations with an objective that is to the general benefit of the community and the social integration of citizens (Borganza, 2004). Like any legally defined enterprise, social cooperatives have legal personality and limited liability (Statutes of BC, 2012). Within social cooperatives, various categories of stakeholders may become members, including paid employees, service users, volunteers, financial investors and public institutions. Depending on the specific constitution of the organization, membership can have varying levels of voting privileges in terms of deciding on the composition of board, management and governing policies. Voting is one person and one vote (Statutes of BC, 2012). The inclusiveness of the ability to have any individual associated to the organization as a voting member, especially employees and those receiving services, spreads accountability, responsibility and power through all levels of the organization. In addition, social cooperatives are able to produce goods and services that may be sold for profit like a social enterprise where revenue goes towards supporting the organization (Fazzi, 2011) which makes them a good legal fit to allow for the sale of produce such as from the garden of the Apprenticeship Skills Program. As a not for profit entity, dissolution of the organization is altruistic, meaning assets accrued may not be distributed among members, only donated to another non-profit entity if the organization should end (Statutes of BC, 2012).

Still in their infancy in B.C., social cooperatives emerged first and have proliferated in Italy mostly in the realm of providing social services to marginalized populations including individuals living with disabilities, disadvantaged workers, prisoners and at risk youth (Borzaga, 2004). Within Italy, social cooperatives are recognized as coming in two forms: A type and B type. A types are of the form where the organization provides some type of social, health or educational service to the community. B types are engaged in work integration of disadvantaged workers. In many cases social co-operatives are a mix of the two (Borzaga, 2004).

Because of their structures, social cooperatives allow a greater attentiveness to the needs of their users because hierarchical and bureaucratic mechanisms typically found within public social and educational services are replaced with more localized, flexible, representative and participatory ones (Borzaga, 2004; Fazzi, 2011). With voting membership composed of the organization's staff, beneficiaries and other community stakeholders, the governance of the organization is accountable and responsive to the specific local context within which it operates. This responsiveness is also helped by the smaller and more flexible size that these organizations typically grow to, reaching on average, 30 employees. In addition, multi-stakeholder governance places all stakeholders on an equal footing, creating the legal requirement, and thus, a container for the dialogue between all relevant perspectives in terms of holding the management and operation of the organization accountable to the perspectives of those most affected by decisions, namely staff and participants. In Italian B type social cooperatives, 30% of voting members must be composed of the beneficiaries of the service or one of their family members (Borzaga, 2004).

Within the larger social system of relationships between organizations, the social cooperative structure also allows for a greater degree of autonomy in terms of the organization determining its policy and practice according to the unique needs of its members because its structure allows access to a diversity of revenue streams (Borzaga, 2011). These streams include donations, voluntary work, government and private funding, and the production of goods and services for exchange with the community. Differentiated sources of funding make it possible to reduce interference by individual financiers, giving the enterprise greater discretion in decision-making (Borzaga, 2011). The constraining effect of an over-dependence on one funding body, typically in regards to public funding, has been coined “coercive isomorphism” (Powell & Dimaggio, 1999). Coercive isomorphism is where this financial dependence of the organization is often accompanied by explicit pressures for standardization to adopt externally prescribed goals and models of behavior making it difficult to stay flexible and responsive to the needs of those the organization is meant to serve (Powell & Dimaggio, 1999). In Italy, B-type social cooperatives that focus on work integration of marginalized groups through their direct inclusion in the production of goods and services for the community, much like the Apprenticeship Skills Program, generate up to 35% of their own operating costs (Borzaga, 2004; Fazzi, 2011).

A high degree of employee satisfaction, loyalty and commitment has also been observed in social cooperatives (Borzaga, 2006). Much like the study participants within the Apprenticeship Skills Program, the clear social cause of the work within social cooperatives has been shown to provide high job satisfaction because of the sense of

purpose it provides. However, in contrast to a regular non-profit charity or large social service bureaucracy, a higher degree of employee effort, commitment and loyalty has also been observed in social cooperatives because of the added input of workers into the governance of their organization (Borzaga, 2011). In addition, within these organizations employees are held more accountable to themselves because they are more directly involved in their own governance. This creates a greater sense of autonomy because the stricter controls necessary to operate a larger more top-down bureaucracy are not needed. As a result of these benefits, despite the generally lower wages of the non-profit sector, the sense of purpose and autonomy embedded in the social cooperative structure maintains a high degree of employee productivity directed towards the health of the community (Borzaga, 2011).

A specific application of the social cooperative in Italy most relevant to the discussion around organizational structures best suited for administering alternative educational programs similar to the Apprenticeship Skills program and accommodating the integral design recommendations for effective practice are *Rural Cooperatives for Local Development (RCLD's)*. *RCLD's* are part of a group of social cooperatives that have been coined as being part of the “Social Farming” movement (Fazzi, 2011). These social cooperatives first arose in the 1980s and 1990s on the initiative of groups of individuals who saw traditional rural activities as ways to respond to the needs of marginalized persons (Fazzi, 2011). Like the Apprenticeship Skills Program these cooperatives regard the development of sustainable local food production as an engine of economic, environmental and social integration.

The term 'social farming' encompasses a wide array of different practices that include therapeutic health, employment training, education, and community development for a wide spectrum of marginalized groups (Fazzi, 2011). These practices are undertaken within activities typical of the rural economy such as farming, animal husbandry, and agritourism. Some forms of social farming have a greater emphasis on the therapeutic/educational aspects of the activities (De Bruin et al., 2010), some on the work-integration aspects and others on the potential for community development of localized food production resources. Cooperatives that are an integration of all three focuses; educational/therapeutic benefits, work integration and community development, such as an RCLD, seem to be the most relevant to the design of an organization that would be ideal to administer the Apprenticeship Skills Program.

The distinctive feature of RCLDs is that they carry out activities which produce direct benefits not only for their users but also for other actors in the local community by providing them with explicit economic or social advantages (Fazzi, 2011). This type of approach where focus is moved from rehabilitation of individuals towards their inclusion in the contribution to the community is central to the orientation of the integral design recommendations proposed by this thesis.

The success of RCLDs for the integration of marginalized groups and the local production of agricultural land is their ability to provide meaningful work and to make resources previously obsolete or deprived of economic and social recognition, like those typical of the rural world, productive and socially approved (Fazzi, 2011). RCLDs accomplish this by making smaller scale, localized food production economically viable

through its integration with the provision of a crucial social service (Fazzi, 2011). RCLDs have also been successful because they maintain a very diverse stakeholder membership, allowing for a greater community dialogue, a wider access to resources and a greater integration of marginalized individuals through their direct inclusion into the dialogues negotiating community needs. Successful RCLD's, because of their need to be economically productive, also have a very diverse group of employees that strays from the traditional dominance of social workers and includes such professions as agronomists, agricultural technicians, building trades and graduates in business economics, marketing and communications (Fazzi, 2011). For marginalized and street-involved youth, this diversity of backgrounds provides an excellent milieu for mentorship, options to apprentice in a diversity of valuable skills, and the expansion of social networks. In addition, by expanding the purpose of similarly structured organizations to include the production of other socially valued and environmentally sustainable products and services such as bicycle repair, installation of energy saving technology, art, and community research and activism; the possibilities become endless.

It is clear that the structure and focus of an RCLD like social cooperative is well suited to effectively apply the integral design recommendations such as mixed age groups from diverse backgrounds and active contribution to the community without straining the legal parameters and public perception of how these organizations are socially defined. In addition, the democratic nature of their structure increases the ability of these organizations in maintaining an atmosphere of empowerment. However, in the application of a social cooperative model such as an RCLD to administer alternative education programs for marginalized and street-involved youth, there is still the question

of how to best include these youth in the organization's voting membership. In the broader society adolescents do not have legal status in terms of voting rights for municipal, provincial and federal governance. This brings up the consideration of *ability* to participate in democratic social structures which, must be present along with *access* to them. In the broader society, youth are deemed as not able to participate in democratic processes at the levels of government because of their immaturity in age. This is despite an overwhelming amount of historical evidence that the majority of adolescent age youth are more than intellectually competent for many of these decisions if they had the opportunity to understand their potential for responsibility (Gatto, 2009).

To better develop this democratic responsibility and ability in youth, a scaled approach may be useful, where the developing individual assumes greater social control, power and voting rights incrementally at varying scales. First, the ability for democratic participation within the groups the youth operates in should be nurtured through interpersonal and group process techniques that illicit dialogue, listening, perspective taking, reflection, deliberate democratic/consensus based decision making and collaborative action towards shared goals. In addition, organizational policies can require that these youth be included in organizational sub-committees where their perspective is actively sought out to inform organizational policy. After this type of participation within groups and informal organizational processes has been achieved, the next logical step would seem to be the legal recognition of these youth's rights to participate in decision making through their inclusion in the voting membership of the social cooperative. Little information on how adolescents are included in the membership structure of social cooperatives is available and would be a very valuable area to investigate in future

studies investigating effective practices in the design of alternative education programs seeking to engage marginalized and street-involved youth.

The provision of alternative educational programs for adolescents following the integral design recommendations within an organizational context of an RCLD like social cooperative could be an ideal educational environment to effectively develop the social inclusion of marginalized and street-involved youth because of the RCLD's ability to nurture an environment of empowerment with its democratic administrative practices and its flexibility to accommodate progressive approaches because of how it is socially defined. Promoters of experiential education have long since expressed a need for a broader form of education geared towards shaping a responsible citizenry capable of fully participating within a democratic society (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1973; Itin, 1999). This need for a broader education is all the more pressing for marginalized and street-involved youth who are at an even greater disadvantage of being able to speak up, be listened to and contribute in the dialogue of society. Following the central tenet of experiential education that the most effective means of learning is "learning by doing", as put by a promoter of experiential education:

The educational process must mirror those results that society desires.

In other words, the content being taught is as important as the process by which it is taught and the context in which it is taught. If we want to develop critically thinking, self-motivated, problem-solving individuals who participate actively in their communities, we must have an educational system and educational approaches that model and support

this. (Itin, 1999, p.96)

An RCLD like social cooperative that applies the integral design recommendations is an educational microcosm whose process truly mirrors the results that a democratic society desires. Not only are youth put in an environment where they are immediately contributing to the health and economy of their local community, they are also asked to actively engage in the decision making of the group they are invited to participate in and along side staff, volunteers and other participants who are empowered to do so as well.

Considerations and Final Revised List of Recommendations for Effective Practice

This study investigated the application of a series of design recommendations for effective practices in engaging marginalized and street-involved youth in alternative educations programs. These recommendations were informed by an integral systems theory framework of development and were investigated through a case study analysis. Findings from this study centered around the experiences of adolescents participating within the case study program that were identifiable as having experienced marginalization and/or street involvement. As a potential drawback in methodology, the small number of participants in the case study may have limited the degree to which the findings might be transferable to the experiences of marginalized and street-involved youth as a whole.

In addition, a limitation in the application of the integral model is the omission of the spiritual levels of relational exchange associated to a sense of deep connection experienced by the individual towards their physical and social environment. Society is

still wary about the inclusion of spirituality within its educational practices because of past abuses by institutions organized by religious top-down hierarchies of control. However, within a more mature social and organizational context that values and protects diversity, the nurturing of these types of experiences of deep connection may be the most effective approach in assisting the integration of marginalized groups and the development of a more inclusive and compassionate society. Although addressed in the Apprenticeship Skills Program to a certain degree, a greater focus on the spiritual is providing youth more space, guidance, experiences and tools of how to connect and become more aware of their inner world and the relationship its well-being has to the food they eat, the activities they engage in and the relationships they create.

Finally, to conclude this study a revised list of design recommendations for effective practices in engaging marginalized and street-involved youth in alternative education programs is presented along with a closing remarks regarding application. This list follows the original three integral design recommendations, and expands the two sub-conditions (i. and ii.) into their own recommendations along with an additional recommendation emerging out of the discussion. These design recommendations, written in simplified concrete terms, are as follows:

Recommendation One

Programs should be based on a curriculum that centers around employable skill development through active direct participation of youth in valued contribution to the community through the production of communal assets and marketable goods and services. (Access to exchanges of belongingness/care, esteem and autonomy, and

nurturing greater independence in securing material exchanges)

Recommendation Two (formerly condition 1.i.)

Tasks of projects within the program available for youth to engage in are broad enough in their diversity and difficulty to allow youth of any ability to be successful in seeing themselves and being seen and as a valued contributor while enhancing their skill development. (Access to societal exchanges of esteem)

Recommendation Three (formerly condition 1.ii.)

Remuneration for the youth's contribution to the community is provided to the degree that it supports them securing their basic material needs. (Expressing value of contribution in relational exchange of esteem and supporting immediate material exchanges)

Recommendation Four (formerly Recommendation two)

Adults facilitating the program are competent and trained in developing caring and supportive relationships, able to provide counseling support, capable in supporting the development of inclusive group norms and facilitating youth centered reflective processing of experience as per experiential education practices. (Supporting exchanges of safety/security, belongingness/care and autonomy)

Recommendation Five (formerly recommendation three)

Peer groups are of mixed ages from diverse backgrounds where youth identifiable as marginalized and/or street involved are a minority. (Avoiding perpetuating an excluded

identity that seeks belongingness and esteem within other excluded groups)

Recommendation Six

The alternative educational program is administered within a RCCL-like Social Co-operative organizational context where management is democratically controlled by multi-stakeholder voting membership and goods and services are produced for exchange with the community as a revenue stream to support the organization's operations. Voting membership must include all staff with access to voting membership made available to participating youth and other community stakeholders. (Relieves structural obstruction of exchanges of power/control and autonomy, nurtures relative autonomy of the individual and community, addresses the influence of mediating contexts such as the organizational environment)

In closing, although the provision of alternative programs through an RCLD-like social-cooperative would be an ideal to explore and potentially more amenable to supporting the implementation of the first five practice recommendations, if this organizational context is not possible, the inclusion of the first five recommendations in adjunct programs within already established alternative programs within non-profit charities and the public education system would still be very helpful. In this application as an adjunct, youth could participate 2-3 days of their school week learning immediately employable skills and social competencies through *paid* participation in projects that contribute directly to the development of a community asset. This type of adjunct to alternative programs would support a greater degree of connectivity of these youth to their educational community because of the positive bonding that occurs between peers

during community projects and the increased financial support they would receive to meet basic needs. This increased feeling of connectivity and support, has been shown in the literature to have the benefit of supporting greater participation of these youth in their course work needed for current graduation requirements (Bond et al., 2007; Rowe & Stewart, 2009).

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