An Analysis of Alternative Education Programs Designed to
Engage the Anti-School Subculture

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my one and only daughter, both my saviour and my albatross, all of my joy and angst, Madeline May Vandale. May she surpass me in every possible way.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gather and analyze qualitative data regarding alternative education programs which engage members of the anti-school subculture in learning. The researcher focused on a specific identifiable group of marginalized youth who have not been successful in regular high schools termed the Anti-School Kids.

The researcher interviewed six adults who run a variety of alternative education programs in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The research instrument was a series of 15 questions designed to help identify strategies in school division affiliated alternative and non-school division affiliated alternative programs which would help marginalized youth learn, some of which may be transferable to mainstream institutions. The researcher conducted six personal interviews over a six-month period. The questions were grouped into four categories, which were also used to sort and code the data. They are as follows: Contextual dimension, interpersonal dimension, structural dimension and professional dimension. As a result of the perspectives shared by the study's participants, a fifth category was identified during the process. This category of data reveals possible strategies of engagement used by these programs and supported by the literature review. The transcribed interviews resulted in a total of 100 pages of data. All of the data were then analyzed using a phenomenological research approach.

Some of the major concepts which are covered in this thesis include the theory of the social bond (to school); the formation of youth's social identity, formed through

their associations. Wyn & White supply specific characteristics of the Anti-School Kid: "urban-living, high residential mobility, minority group status, weak attachment to school or poor school performance..." (1997, p.35). The sociological concept of grouping plays a critical role in both the problem and the proposed solutions, to be reported in Chapter 4 & 5. The researcher also relies on the theory of social capital to help explain the distribution of power within the high school groups. What has come through loud and clear from Davies & Guppy (2006) is the role that a youth's identity has in forming behaviours that facilitate school success and failure.

The main questions of this thesis is how can educators work *with* the identity of Anti-School Kids to help them graduate high school, despite anti-school behaviours which are part of these youths' life circumstances and group membership? Varied points of view were explored in the literature review as to what works for students who demonstrate anti-school behaviour. Also, how both students and teachers operate on a daily basis is definitely affected by institutional factors such as the structure of the timetable, the building itself, and other factors reported in the data. The researcher used the research instrument and the literature review to examine what role schools play in creating groups in the margins and maintaining them.

The researcher argues the position that due to institutional factors, family situation, socioeconomic status and other environmental factors, Anti-School Kids do not freely nor consciously choose their negative paths. Their behaviours are inextricably rooted in their social identity, rendering them incapable of demonstrating pro-school behaviours.

This position has only been strengthened with the data results.

The conclusions in Chapter 5 highlight best practices brought to our attention by the experience of the study participants which successfully engage Anti-School Kids. First, to demonstrate caring to the students, showing an interest in their learning by dealing with them one-on-one as much as possible. Second, to be consistent, something that is crucial to Anti-School Kids' who have little of this in their lives outside of school. Third, to recognize the importance of timeliness in terms of what that student needs at any given time and to handle their learning with flexibility. Last, to be able to organize the priorities within the education system in order to reach the overall goals for each student; in other words, do not let the timetable dictate what students need. Once the reader reviews the results of this study, he/she can decide what will help to successfully engage the anti-school subculture in learning.

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The Problem

Cassie's little sister wakes her up by shaking her shoulders hard, "C'mon, get up, it's 9:12. Can you take me to school? Hurry — we missed breakfast in Miss Louise's room." Cassie and her sister are usually left on their own to start their day. If someone is home, they are sleeping and not to be disturbed. They live in Manitoba Housing with an aunt and four cousins, but a variety of people come and go daily. Every day when they come home from school, they don't know who will be eating from their meagre food supply, watching TV on their lone couch or sleeping in their bed. The one advantage they do have is that they live within walking distance of both their schools. Cassie gets Lily cleaned up and dressed the best she can and delivers her to her grade 5 class. Mrs. Kurtz, her teacher, just smiles and will get Lily a snack right away. Cassie shows up to her grade 9 homeroom and the teacher yells: "Late again, get your lazy self back out into the hallway until I feel like interrupting the lesson to let you in."

This is a sample of how one marginalized youth starts her school day. Do her life circumstances interfere with her school experience? Yes, that would be the opinion of teachers and the school administration. Can the people and culture of school help Cassie to face her non-academic problems, which in turn help her deal with the academic requirements? How can learning be a priority at school when survival is such an integral part of Cassie's life? Will Cassie be able to finish Grade 12 in spite of her day-to-day socio-economic issues? This study asks such questions about marginalized youth like

Cassie, who exist on the edges of the high school population. Answers are provided by alternative education program teachers who interact with students just like Cassie on a daily basis. In addition to the data collected, the researcher will refer to Cassie's story periodically throughout this thesis to put a face to this widespread problem in our communities and schools.

Focus of this Study

This study is mainly concerned with how teachers can help students to cope with the daily challenges of marginality, and yet engage in learning, through alternative programming. In Cassie's case, she has been rejected by the dominant culture group at her mainstream school, by both peers and adult members of that group. Because of this, she has become a member of the anti-school subculture, who are the focus group of this study. To clarify the breakdown of the groups at Industrial Arts Collegiate, which is the fictional school referred to throughout this thesis, refer to Figure 1. This is an original model created by the author. The top of the pyramid contains the marginalized group at Industrial Arts Collegiate, which is meant to be a smaller sample of marginalized youth in general society. This group is further broken into eight subcultures. The one of interest to the researcher will from here on be referred to as the Anti-School Kids.

This thesis states the problem as this: marginalized youth are often unable to achieve a high school diploma within a mainstream high school environment. The study will use qualitative research methods to gather information from alternative

FIGURE 1 Class-Cultural Pyramid

10   0

Level of social &
economic marginaliza-
tion

Level of power &
status of group

Marginalized

ANTI-SCHOOL KIDS,
FIGHTERS, LGBT, FREAKS,
SMOKERS, EMOS, FOSTERS,
DOPERS AND GAMBLERS

Mixed ethnicities & genders &
classes ALL under the LICO*

Aboriginal: First Nations & Métis

ALL classes and both genders;
Both over and under the LICO

0   10

Caucasian/Canadian-European Descent

INCLUDES ENGLISH, SCOTTISH, GERMAN, CANADIAN,
UKRAINIAN, IRISH, FRENCH

Low class and both genders;
Under the LICO

Philippino & Newcomers

INCLUDES ETHIOPIA, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, INDIA, SUDAN, UKRAINE,
AFGHANASTAN, SOUTH KOREA, USA, AND ARGENTINA

ALL classes and both genders;
Both over and under the LICO

DOMINANT CULTURE: Caucasian/Canadian-European Descent

INCLUDES ENGLISH, SCOTTISH, GERMAN, CANADIAN,
UKRAINIAN, IRISH, FRENCH

Middle & High Classes and both genders
All over the LICO

*LICO: The LICO (low-income cut-off) varies as an actual figure. The cut-offs
are set where families spend 20 percentage points or more of their income than
the Canadian average on food, shelter and clothing (taking into account size
of community of residence and family size) and hence can be considered to
be living in straightened circumstances. Source: WSD School Demographics
2007/08, see References.*

education programs, seeking knowledge about strategies to help the Anti-School

Kids graduate with a Grade 12 diploma or re-engage in some form of education,

employment or training.

How Youth are Marginalized

What do we mean by the marginalization of youth? "The systematic

marginalization of young people is marked by the disintegration of connections with

mainstream social institutions such as school and work, and a tenuous search for

meaning in an uncaring and unforgiving world" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 21).

Marginalization is often linked to a resource deficit, and education is, of course, a

resource.

The Anti-School Kids in this study are not successful at earning credits, and

therefore graduating. They may not officially drop out, but their attendance is so poor

they can not possibly achieve the required mark of 50%. However, they do not officially

withdraw because of reasons explored in Chapter Two.

Marginalized youth can best be defined as follows, summarized by the researcher:

When members of a specific and identifiable group of people demonstrate in an

observable way that they have less access or are denied access to _____, then

they are termed marginalized. This blank could be money, knowledge, power, status —

any number of commodities of value available in our society, including education.

This leads to another question: Why do marginalized students exist on the outside

edges of school, just as they do in the community? Is the group environment within schools a mirror of the status groups in society as a whole? What about the ideal of schools as the great equalizer in modern society? Or are schools another vehicle for stratification of the classes? "Others see schools as not socializing everyone fairly or equally…more or less deliberately nurturing some students for positions of advantage and others for a lifetime of subordination" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 4).

Why Does the Problem Matter?

What percentage of the high school population fits Cassie's profile? If it is low, then does her struggle even matter? A recent article in *The Manitoba Teacher* explains at length the link between crime (including murder) and graduation rates. St. Germain states: "Education leads to better job prospects and higher earnings, …along with risk-aversion and positive ties to similarly educated peer groups" (p. 1, 2010). The author goes on to detail several alternative programs designed to provide targeted intervention, as will be discussed in this thesis in Chapter Five. The statistics provided show the link between education levels and arrests for a variety of crimes. Since the public serve as stake holders in Manitoba's education system, I am certain they would agree that yes, the problem does matter on a multitude of levels.

As for Cassie, is she on her way to being a juvenile delinquent, just a disruptive student, or another at-risk teenager? "The very term 'at-risk' (has) become increasingly identified with youth as a whole (and) particular problems become identified as young

people's problems: school failure, homelessness, suicide, unemployment, drugs, crime,

single parenthood" (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001, p. 145). The researcher chooses to focus on

marginality instead of using the term 'at-risk'. Marginality will be explained fully, as

will subcultures, in Chapter Two.

Where the term 'at-risk ' is valuable in this discussion is when it is recognized as a

term to describe what a student does — his or her behaviour — not just their ethnicity

or what neighbourhood they live in. Lamoureux (2006) points out the benefit of labeling

a student at-risk comes only if the "at-risk terminology is a call to action; an indicator

that someone needs help." This definition frames the study, urging educators to action

in the face of frustrating anti-school behaviours that may require patient, creative

problem solving.

However, it is important to note that this thesis does not focus on programming

designed to bring the marginalized *back* into the mainstream but to analyze alternative

programs outside the mainstream which will help those students find an end to those

specific problems. This thesis will examine the workings of alternative programs,

both school division affiliated and non-school division affiliated, to sort through the

solutions they offer to students who experience living and learning problems similar to

Cassie's.

The Theory Behind the Problem

The influence of group dynamics on the anti-school subculture led the researcher to

make the link to the Theory of Social Control, as defined by Hirschi (1969), which Eith

(2005) further studies and introduces as follows:

> … conforming behaviour is a result of strong pro-social bonds with
>
> society. (And) when a student has an attachment to the school, is
>
> committed to school and academic success, is involved in school related
>
> activities, and believes that the rules and policies are fair, he or she is less
>
> likely to engage in delinquent activities. (p.1)

The researcher will explore the literature related to the problem using this

theoretical framework. Is there a direct link between the strengths and weaknesses of

these four bonds between a student and a school that result in anti-school behaviour?

Is it possible that the Theory of Social Control describes symptoms of a student's social

class, which are beyond the influence of an individual teacher? If so, what can a teacher

change within her classroom environment to better match education goals of lower-

class students, regardless of the strength of their bonds to school?

Within these classrooms, what exactly is the problem with anti-school behaviour?

Is it the behaviour which prevents the Anti-School Kids from graduating? How does it

harm them or others? It may be that educators have to dig further, past the behaviours

and deal with the source, to allow learning to continue. Or maybe teachers have to

accept these behaviours as part of these students' identities — can they deal with that?

As Davies & Guppy (2006) suggest, school deviance is often mild, not overtly violent or

posing serious physical threats. But as most classroom teachers would agree, mundane

forms of deviance do hamper educational goals. If one of these goals is the diploma, then yes, the problem has to be solved.

> *Here's how Cassie's behaviour affects her school performance. Instead of*
>
> *sitting in her English class reviewing the assignment, she is standing out*
>
> *on the front steps, smoking, spitting, gambling with dice, swearing, yelling,*
>
> *talking on her cell phone, wearing her hat, with her hoodie covering her eyes.*

If a teacher finds her here, the behaviour has to be addressed since it may hinder educational goals. There are several conversations and courses of action that could be taken. If Hirschi's theory were to be followed, the bond which deals with the student's belief that the rules and policies are fair would be a place to start this conversation.

Secondly, if the teacher knew Cassie, he would realize that she does not want to be sent home; she is happy to be at school. Her behaviour is not a result of hating school or wanting to anger the adults there. She may want their attention, since these are the only significant adults in her life and she likes them very much. These reasons will be explained and explored in Chapter Two. Possible reasons for such behaviours is "only answerable by consideration of [her] personal life history, immediate life circumstances, and her position in the wider social structure" (White & Wyn, 2008, p. 165).

The Behaviour Behind the Problem

Does anyone know what motivates someone like Cassie, to show up day after day and trudge into class, hungry, neglected by significant adults in her life, lonely, tired,

and poorly dressed? Is this what makes her act aggressively toward peers outside her anti-school subculture and toward the teachers? Is there any hope for students like her? White and Wyn (2008) show there is reason for optimism. Most of these anti-school behaviours are neither criminal in nature nor intent, but are only part of her outward appearance and social identity. As they suggest,

> Identity is forged in the context of specific social practices, which may be collective in nature, as with youth subcultures.…individuals negotiate who they are and who they wish to be in relation to external objective factors and internal subjective experiences. Identity formation is never fixed; it is always a work in progress. (p. 196)

Cassie's identity, including the anti-school behaviours, is fluid and changes with the context, and within school, depending a great deal on her peer group.

With regards to the rule-breaking behaviour, "most of these activities are relatively harmless and most young people are not criminals, nor will they continue to engage in unlawful activities — and certainly not serious ones — once they move into their post-teenage years" (White & Wyn, 2008, p. 156). Educators do have reason to be concerned about students who repeatedly demonstrate anti-school behaviours, but should know most will desist with age, particularly as their identities take shape and they are no longer within the confines of the school group dynamics.

Cassie's dress and physical acts (the opposite of known and accepted school norms) are crucial to her social identity, which is one of the multiple reasons she behaves in

this manner. Consistent with Eith's (2005) theory of social bonds, Cassie would not act

in these ways without the audience, which includes her peers, other students and her

teachers. But because her attachment to school through the four bonds is weak, she

needs to demonstrate her rejection to school through such anti-school behaviour. In

order for this behaviour to be noticed, she stands on the front steps. It is possible that

if the audience is removed, the anti-school behaviours might be less prevalent? This is

why Anti-School Kids are often moved to an off-campus location. This location could

be one of the alternative programs, either school division affiliated programs or ones

which are not affiliated with the school division. This is not expulsion; it is being placed

into a program according to the student's needs to give her a chance at learning, and

therefore at graduating.

Digging Further into the Behaviour

   Why do students who are barely engaged in the core business of school stay in

school? First, maintaining a tie to the school is still valuable, no matter how tenuous

it may be, either to prove rejection through non-attendance or because school has

always contributed to one's identity, even though they hate it or reject all aspects of it.

Because "people construct their identities through social interaction (and) one of the

key places where this happens is in schools, because these are places where people are

engaged with each other in the interactional work of making *meaning*. These are places

for making the *core* meaning, of self or identity among people" (Wyn & White, 1997,

p.65). Also, if they formally withdraw they may have to create a new plan or path for

themselves and they are likely incapable of doing that. It would also create a need to

expand or develop other areas of their personality, which they may not ready for.

Does Cassie needs to remain in school to have these behaviours noticed? Is this part

of developing her social identity? She might continue physically coming to the school

building, if not to class; at least until the security of school is replaced by another social

organization (bond), like a gang, her subculture or a workplace. What this thesis asks

is how to keep Cassie learning until she is ready to move onto the next stage of her

life, before she leaves school entirely. Can this be achieved through teachers who can

connect to students like Cassie? And how exactly do they connect? Is it through one

of the four school social bonds? Do these teachers understand how critical their group

associations are to students and the many factors which shape their identity in terms of

societal and individual factors?

External Influences on the Problem

After the characteristics of marginalized youth are outlined, this thesis will examine

what role high schools play as institutions which influence the progress or lack of

progress of these students. It will also examine how they do or do not facilitate the

students' anti-school behaviour which is part of their identity as a member of that

subculture. What social factors within the school organization prevent or allow these

students to be a part of it? And then, what is the nature of the interaction between these

groups that either causes the failure or could work to repair it? And what about the important role of social capital and social networks as external influences?

In terms of groups of students in high school, the most relevant definition of social capital is the norms and networks which enable people to act collectively. Coleman (1990, p. 304) defines social capital as organic, in that "social capital…is created when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action." Focusing on the active aspect of norms, "schools are a social institution much like the family, reinforcing pro-social norms and values while punishing antisocial behaviour" (Eith, 2005, p. 3). There are two separate, relatable and powerful entities at work here. There is the school, represented by adults, who reinforce a set of norms to which students respond either positively or negatively to, placing themselves either as *pro* or *anti.* Then, the student groups (for example, Emos, Scene, Fighters and other current Manitoba subculture groups) who, among themselves, set norms for membership or non-membership.

Where a student ranks within his/her group determines his/her access to social capital. Also, depending if that student is pro- or anti-school will determine the strength or weakness of his/her social bonds to school. Eith's (2005) four social bonds follow, along with comments intended to provide a practical link to daily school life.

The first bond is Attachment to School, which addresses the connection an individual has with others. This would include how subcultures interact at school. The second bond of School Commitment, this being conveyed by the priority the school holds for the student as well as the student's investment in school activities.

This would be demonstrated by a student's attendance and official involvement in activities such as student voice groups. The third bond of School Involvement refers to an individual's attendance at school events like sports and clubs. This includes being a spectator or friend, not necessarily a participant, which also counts. The fourth bond, Belief in School, is the acceptance of the values and norms of the school. This would be demonstrated by student behaviour in terms of adherence to policies such as dress code and rules, written or otherwise.

The critical links between the strength of school bonds and delinquency (anti-school behaviours) and subsequent school failure will be explored in Chapter Two. This thesis aims to explore the possible relationship between the failure of marginalized students within the mainstream to the weakness of their social bonds. Then, the researcher will explore how alternative education programs possibly address these bonds to create a successful learning experience with students of that same group.

These alternative education programs may count for provincial high school credit but some may not. Regardless, both types offer the opportunity for marginalized students to accomplish goals in their lives and can give them specific direction and purpose, in both formal and informal ways. These programs may lead to these youths returning to mainstream school or achieving the equivalent credential and/or lead them to employment where they were previously unemployable.

Marginality

There are several definitions of *marginality* in the sociological literature, but its meaning in terms of this study is explained as a state of being which has resulted from one of the unintended functions of schooling.

Barakett and Cleghorn (2000) remind us that one of the overt functions of school is to "transmit the society's existing culture, which is defined as the ways of perceiving, thinking, believing, and behaving that characterize the members of a particular social group." Students who do not exhibit these ways are marginalized, or live outside of the main social groups within their school. Of course, "the culture that is being transmitted in school reflects the values and attitudes of the so-called dominant group"(p. 4). The unintended function of school, therefore, is to separate students into groups, marginalizing some and mainstreaming others.

One of the intended functions of schooling is acculturation. This term "refers to the changes that occur within a group through culture contact and through the process of adapting to and taking on the values, attitudes, and ways of behaving of the culturally dominant group" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 4). When students are not able to adapt, they become marginalized and are identified as marginalized by teachers or administrators. This label of marginalized may be applied to students who demonstrate some or all of the following behaviours, observed by teachers at Industrial Arts Collegiate during the school years between 2002 and 2009:

- an unwillingness to follow verbal requests or directions;

- an inability to follow stated classroom and school-wide rules and expectations;

- an inability to complete and/or submit assignments;

- an unwillingness to comply with authority of adults in the building; and

- an inability to follow the confines of a school day or timetable.

Stratification and evaluating students based on social behaviours rather than ability is also part of this form of marginalization. Do we actually believe "that those who achieve well in school have done so through hard work, and by being evaluated according to objective and 'fair' (universalistic) principles? Most people prefer to believe that a family's social class, racial origin, language spoken at home, and other particularistic criteria do not affect a student's performance at school" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 6). This study includes the following factors [synthesized by referencing data found on the Winnipeg School Division web site, under the category of School Demographics, 2007/2008 (www.wsd1.org)] as other criteria that may have an effect on student performance:

- where the student lives (with whom i.e. parents, extended family, friends, or in the custody of Child and Family Services);

- persons included in that household (aunts and cousins, foster children, family friends, grandparents, siblings and their children);

- family income and sources of that income (who works in the household, is the work legal, including the student);

- form of transportation (does the family have access to a private vehicle or only

public transportation); and

- economic marginalization in terms of unemployment and poverty.

If a student is living apart from a parent, a teacher or administrator could ask the following questions to determine the level of marginalization: Has that student ever had a social worker and/or ever been in foster care or a group home? Has that student ever been in a juvenile detention facility? A response of "yes" to any of these factors will contribute to a student's economic and possible social marginalization.

How can economic marginalization be measured?

> The economic, social and political marginalization of people is uneven and, in Western societies, is based upon wider social divisions linked to class position, ethnicity, indigenous background, and gender relationships. The social costs of marginality are inevitably translated into the economic costs of crime. But the social costs of marginality are also transformed into behaviour that is officially defined as antisocial and dangerous. All of this is bound to have an impact on the self-image of marginalized young people and their efforts at self-defense in a hostile environment" (White & Wyn, 2008, p. 165).

One of those hostile environments can be recognized as high school. And some of these marginalized youths' attempts at self-defense can be recognized in anti-school behaviours which impede learning and therefore graduation and subsequent economic benefits.

Of course, not all marginalized youth in high school will require extra assistance to reach graduation. If, for example, a student only has two of those five identified factors of marginalization, s/he may move through regular programming and graduate without too much of a struggle. That student may be more economically marginalized, rather than socially marginalized and have social skills that are developed enough to make up for economic challenges. Some marginalized students will require assistance from their peers, however, and will begin to navigate the ups and downs of high school life as a member of a subculture.

The researcher will look specifically at one of these forms, which is identified as the anti-school subculture and will be referred to as the Anti-School Kids in this study. First, a closer look at marginalized youth who are still in school is in order.

Economically and Socially Marginalized Youth

To analyze economically and socially marginalized youth, the researcher can use Cassie's life circumstances and characteristics. First, as a case in point, her socio-economic status parallels that of her parent or main caregiver. This means that she is economically marginalized, which means her family circumstances include one or all of the following:

- She does not own a home, but instead rents or lives in government subsidized housing;
- She receives social assistance;

- Her parents did not graduate from high school; and

- She lives under the poverty line (LICO, low income cut-off). *See Figure 1 on page 3 for definition of LICO.*

Cassie is also is socially marginalized, meaning that she is not a member of the dominant culture group in her high school. She does not share their "ways of perceiving, thinking, believing and behaving"(Barakett and Cleghorn, 2000, p. 4). She does not share their ethnic background, social mores, language and dress. Furthermore, she is a lesbian and is overweight. These characteristics combine to label her as socially marginalized.

Students who are economically and/or socially marginalized can demonstrate certain identifiable behaviours at school, both in and out of the classroom. All of these behaviours suggest a rejection of schooling in the form which they had previously embraced, or tolerated, and participated in until high school (grade 9). The form refers to the physical structure and markers such as the first bell which signifies that students should be in their classrooms with their supplies. The second bell signifies the playing of *O Canada* and the reading of the daily announcements, during which time students are to stand and then sit quietly without talking. Once the announcements are over, the teacher leads the discussion and the daily activities commence.

As each subject slot ends, a bell signals for students to move to their next class. Students are not allowed to go outside to smoke or even to go to their lockers. They are not to be in the hallway or talking on cell phones or visiting the vending machines or

cafeteria. Marginalized youth can be seen to be breaking a lot of these rules or unable to meet the expectations due to their rejection of these norms and/or rituals. This thesis seeks to explore some of the reasons they reject physical structures and markers such as these. Further exploration of the daily circumstances faced by marginalized youth is necessary.

This exploration also brings to light the question of choice: do these marginalized youth reject the structure because it interferes with their daily survival? Or are they consciously trying to create conflict with the institution out of some other needs? It is important to recognize the crucial question of the scope of a young person's ability to choose, particularly one who is living within certain constraints.

Characteristics of Marginalized Youth

Marginalized students are frequently late and it may be perceived by others as non-compliant with the form of the school day. The researcher asks the question: could such non-compliance be a product of the youth's marginalized state of being, and not a willful show of anti-school behaviour? However, if this practice evolves into other delinquent behaviours during the school day, this is when the researcher proposes that marginalized students are demonstrating characteristics of the Anti-School Kids.

Cassie might argue with a teacher who accuses her of choosing to be chronically late. She is rarely able to arrive and be seated before the first bell. What exactly

prevents her from arriving to class on time? In fact, Cassie usually does arrive

at school before the bell, but her first priority is to see her friends who supply her

with money for food, the bus, and to buy cigarettes. She also needs to make that

connection with her friends, as she is lonely — most nights she is left alone at

home. Also, she must stop in at the free food program which is in the foods and

nutrition classroom. If she does not do this before going to her first class, she will

not eat until lunch and she has had nothing since 6 p.m. the previous day. These

components of her survival trump the daily opening exercise worth five marks,

intended by the teacher to motivate students to arrive on time.

Absenteeism is described as non-attendance including arriving late, leaving class

part-way through, leaving before class is over and not returning. This non-attendance

does not mean that they are not on school grounds. They are likely in the building. They

do sometimes stay home, but more often than not, they do come to school, just not to

class. They may be found in the hallways or outside smoking or skateboarding but

they are not attending scheduled classes. It may be that they remain on the premises so

that their behaviour can be observed by peers and adults (teachers and administrators)

and then their rejection is *noticed*! The marginalized student does require some adult

attention and may use this behaviour to get it. A member of the Anti-School Kids

wants the behaviour noticed and reacted to, as it is necessary for his/her identity and

membership in the subculture.

It is possible that their identity as a group of marginalized youth lay partly in the ability to show that they have rejected schooling as it is presented to them in its mainstream format. This is done through these forms of absenteeism. If the dominant group has rejected them (or they never attempted to join because they already knew it would be fruitless), they must assert themselves in this manner to show that they have an identity separate from the mainstream group. This is a visible way of doing so. But this may not be their intention. Absenteeism may be a characteristic and almost a byproduct of life circumstances, not so much a chosen behaviour as with the Anti-School Kids.

Rather than looking at absenteeism as a behaviour, it may be better explained as an accepted ritual depending on a student's group or class membership. White & Wyn, (2008, p. 193) refer to Wexler (1992), who argued that this process of identity production is profoundly 'classed' and that in the absence of a broader sense of civil society, the effects of schooling are to create identities around schooling, which is fundamentally classed by nature, in which there are 'winners' and 'losers'. In other words, the extent to which a student's identity is perceived as being either a 'winner' or a 'loser' is related to some degree to whether or not absenteeism is simply the norm or a common ritual of that group.

The second major characteristic of marginalized students is their economic status. Many of these marginalized students are poor. Since there is often physical separation from their parents and other adult networks, they are also shut off from adult resources

and any support they may give them. This separation referred to — not living with

either parent — does not exclude extended family; these students could be living with

an older sibling, an aunt or grandmother. Even so, they cannot or do not network

outside of their marginalized group. How does poverty translate into these young

people's daily lives?

> Street-involved and marginalized youth live on the fringes of society.
>
> Their home and school lives are complicated, characterized by conflict
>
> and stress. They may mistrust adults. They are engaged in a daily
>
> struggle for survival…(living a) risky and precarious life characterized
>
> by poverty, residential instability, emotional, physical and psychological
>
> vulnerability. (www.elearn.frontlinehealth.ca)

These students also usually do not have a permanent home address or phone

number (landline), perhaps even lack a cell phone. There is often no work phone

number at which to reach a parent or guardian, not because the adult is not employed,

but they are not in a position to have access to a phone. Contrary to popular perception,

most poor children come from working families, where both parents are absent from

the home due to work responsibilities. Often there is no adult available to speak

to about these students; nor do they have an adult to use as a reference for any

employment. Since they have rejected most school norms, they have little contact with

teachers or adults in the building and therefore, do not have that support or help. These

Kids do not have anyone to ask questions along the lines of how to apply for a social

insurance number.

The following is a list of measurable economic factors that relate to the Anti-School Kids. These factors have been observed by teachers at Industrial Arts Collegiate between the school years of 2002 and 2009. The data collected for this study may show that the Anti-School Kids freely adopt some of these identity markers as part of their group membership, but are mostly conditions imposed by their class-cultural status and economic marginalization: Black only clothing, (but no brands), in the style of Punk, Emo or Scene, which are specific youth subcultures with distinct clothing styles; no cell phone; no iPod; no home computer access; no lunch or snacks; no video games (hand-held or home system); no cash or bus tickets.

What kind of a teenager would willingly take on such characteristics? What would the appeal be? If a young person is already marginalized economically, seeking group membership with those who share your situation allows for social exclusion as a group, rather than as an individual. This group membership provides an identity. Such an identity appeals to the Anti-School Kids, as described in more detail in the next section.

The Anti-School Subculture

"Canadian schools have witnessed a parade of oppositional subcultures from the Greasers of the 1950s to the Hippies of the 1960s to the Punks of the 1980s — today look to the hip-hop culture" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 206). The subjects of this study are a current subculture called the Anti-School Kids. These are students who are registered in

a high school but their attendance rate is less than 50%. They exhibit certain behaviours

that make their rejection of schooling obvious to the adults and peers in the school.

Many of the students in this group are marginalized youth.

However, it is important to emphasize that not all Anti-School Kids are

economically *and* socially marginalized, and there is an element of choice present

in their desire to belong to a group. "Cultural formation is an active process, one

which involves young people themselves choosing and deciding aspects of their own

identity…" (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 76). Also, that "the complexities and limitations of

choice are bound up with both immediate interactions with one's peers and family, and

the economic and social resources available to different groups of young people" (Wyn

and White, 1997, p. 76). Their membership in this subculture could be the result of being

marginalized, and this may be an unintended function of schooling. Also, as Hall and

Jefferson (1993) suggest, a subculture cannot exist without the greater culture which it

opposes. So therefore, students who belong to the Anti-School Kids cannot exist without

still remaining part of the wider school population (p. 6).

The Anti-School Kids actively demonstrate their anti-school identity toward both

peers and adults. Members of this subculture use school as it fits into their social

agenda. Ironically, school is a place where this subculture accesses, builds and exercises

influence through its social network. It would not have any connections or power if it

were not for school, as this is where the majority of their peers are found.

Groups are a product of the social nature of school and with groups come

hierarchies, which can be "best understood as 'status groups'; and these status groups differ from economic classes by having more elaborate norms, rituals, and social boundaries. They develop norms and intense pressures for conformity, especially for intimacies such as eating and romantic relationships" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 206).

In the researcher's experience at one particular high school for a period of seven years, only the mainstream / dominant group ate in the main cafeteria. Many of the marginalized students belonging to groups such as Anti-School, Emo, Scene, Punk or GLBT ate in the art room alone or with one or two people, always with members from their own group. Just because someone places a rainbow on the window of a classroom deeming it a 'safe space' does not necessarily make it so. But these kids know where to go to feel comfortable. The dominant culture group has a large presence in the library as well as the cafeteria. Interestingly, those are the two locations that are school-sanctioned locations for students to go during spare periods.

The dilemma for students who are not members of the dominant culture is this: Do they go where the teachers insist they go (library or cafeteria) and be uncomfortable? Or do they act against the teachers' regulations and hang out where they feel they belong, such as non-sanctioned classrooms or in out-of-bounds hallways? When they are observed demonstrating this anti-school behaviour, it is looked upon as delinquent, when quite possibly it is a result of their group membership and their social status / identity — they may not have a real choice.

However, the students who have formed this subculture have made certain choices

which cut them off from adults and certainly from their parent culture, which is defined

as "values, attitudes, beliefs and practices which they were raised with and are familiar

with" (Wyn and White, 1997, p.75). The Anti-School Kids have made a choice to reject

their parent culture. When they are in school, it could be said they are immersed in the

dominant culture of that school.

Aside from the social times during the school day, much of the students' time is

distributed across various subjects. Also, in some subjects, they are further divided

into levels such as Consumer (low), Applied (mid), and Pre-Calculus (high) Math.

Though the language is no longer used in educational circles, the practice of streaming

is alive and well in Manitoba high schools. This also creates groups within the larger

population of the school.

As Davies & Guppy (2006) argue that, "Subcultural theorists contended that

hierarchical grading and streaming systems created disincentives for unsuccessful

students…Schools had the job of rewarding only *some* students, while deeming many

as academically unfit or unwilling…where they were then housed in terminal streams"

(p. 208.). Some students, particularly those already marginalized and further so by the

streaming, then may become members of the Anti-School Kids.

Is it possible that schools can accept the responsibility for putting low-level students

into a position of delinquency and failure? Davies & Guppy (2006) have stated,

"Accordingly, low-achieving students reacted to their academic failure by establishing

an anti-school 'subculture' that could provide them with an alternate source of social

recognition. Through a process of reaction formation, this subculture was seen to react against the school by inverting its core values" (p. 208).

Such inversion may look like this: Pro-school students are rule-abiding, obedient and hardworking. Subculture members are rule-breaking, non-compliant and disengaged. But why? Is it because "this subculture was seen to express frustration from the thwarted upward mobility that was a necessary outcome of school selection" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 208)? Is this rebellious behaviour part of a cause-effect relationship?

This observation of the phenomena of inversion is further supported by Willis (1977) in *Learning to Labour,* as he explains his theory of opposition to authority and rejection of the conformist. Willis says: "This opposition involves an apparent inversion of the usual values held up by authority. Diligence, deference, respect — these become things which can be read in quite another way" (p. 12).

This also relates to the point made by Hall and Jefferson (1993) that "cultures always stand in relation of domination and subordination, and in some sense in struggle with one another" (p. 5). The counter-school culture takes that exact value held by pro-school and turns it upside down — hence, it is still a reflection of the dominant culture value. It is not something completely different, so that the dominant (pro-school) culture will still recognize the behaviour as its *opposite.* The dominant culture group will notice and care that its values are being inverted, and possibly its beliefs and norms as well — and they will inevitably be appalled!

Wyn and White support these previous statements as follows:

> The concept of 'at-risk' depends on the idea that a majority of young
>
> people are 'on target', making the transitions towards adulthood in the
>
> appropriate way. The concept of 'at risk' and its corollary, the idea of a
>
> 'mainstream', are central to a categorical approach to conceptualizing
>
> youth. (1997, p. 22)

Again, this makes the point that in order to identify a group of 'at-risk', there must be an identifiable group of 'on-target'. A counter-group needs a group to counter!

Davies & Guppy (2006) have clearly identified behaviours brought out by Anti-School Kids trying to demonstrate these values.

> Among males, this rebellion was epitomized by: fighting, confrontations
>
> with authority figures (teachers), smoking and drinking, sexual bravado,
>
> street drugs. …Among females, rebellion was marked by a flaunting of
>
> their physical maturity and emerging sexuality and by a disengagement
>
> from academic matters in favour of a preoccupation with romance. (p.
>
> 208)

This brings up a deeper question about this behaviour: what comes first, the behaviours or the reactions? Do members of this anti-school subculture come into the school already practicing anti-school behaviours which place them in conflict with school expectations? Or are they victims of some form of discrimination due to their marginalized status and institutional structures, which they then rebel against by

demonstrating anti-school behaviour?

Also, what would happen if we removed these students from mainstream classes and placed them in a smaller-scale setting where there was no 'mainstream' and only 'marginalized' youth? They may then be relieved of the pressure to perform for the other group. The positive effect of this could be that learning (a change of behaviour) can actually occur. Maybe without the time-consuming pressure of having to act against something, these students would have the time, energy and focus to learn some content and some social behaviours. This could occur in the alternative programs which are still on-campus and will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Role of Social Capital

What other forms of power do these subcultures wield? Besides the ability to disrupt the process of learning or the flow of one activity to the next within the school walls, what influence does a group like the Anti-School Kids have on others? To answer this, there has to be a measure of the power that exists within this group and that can be done by exploring the concept of social capital. It is possible that these students are marginalized in the first place because of their lack of social capital.

Then what is the role of social capital in terms of groups within schools? "Social capital consists of people's willingness to work together, to join clubs and associations, to get involved in community affairs, and generally to form a dense network of associational life which, while often not ostensibly political, nonetheless contributes

to a spirit of social solidarity and shared citizenship…" (Osborne, 1999, p. 37). Let us focus on "associational life": anti-school also means anti-association. Yet despite non-attendance in class, these students still remain affiliated with the school but not to any organized part of the school (classes, teams, clubs). However, they still cling to a thin thread of belonging by being a registered student, maintaining that home base — why? It is possible that their rejection needs to be noticed *somewhere* in order for it to carry any power or meaning. Do they still require the association to establish part of their identity? In other words, "school" is still part of "anti-school". Or due to their socialization — perhaps — they cannot fully reject the institution of school, as it has been ingrained and there is a need for that association to continue, even in a conflict relationship.

In relation to how it exists within the school context, "part of the social capital that parents bring to schools originates in their social networks. Within their social networks families have different access to information about schools and about children" (Van Galen and Noblit, 2007, p. 170). In most cases of the Anti-School Kids in this study, no parent is attached to the student, so adults are almost totally absent from the school. Therefore, if they do possess *any* social capital, it is of less value because the kids do not have access to it. If their parents do have any of this resource, it cannot benefit the student due to the separation of parent and child. This supports the definition of youth marginalization in this thesis, which is that these young people are denied access to a myriad of social resources and certainly networks.

Also in terms of the wider community, "social capital represents a propensity for mutually beneficial collective action, and it derives from the quality of relationships among people within a particular group or community" (Krishna, 2002, p. i). This speaks to the collective aspect of social capital.

What many can find difficult when trying to grasp the meaning is that "social capital is not directly observable, people carry it inside their heads. What one can observe and measure are some manifestations or behavioural consequences given rise by social capital" (Krishna, 2002, p. x). Also, social capital is defined as "features of a social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Krishna, 2002, p. 1-2). The researcher deems the use of the term "social trust" as critical in the discussion of subcultures and social capital, particularly as it relates to high school youth.

It is important to emphasize the relational aspect of social capital when trying to explain how it thrives within groups. "Whereas economic capital is in people's bank account, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships" (Tierney, 2006, p. 24). Because this thesis deals with both social and economic marginalization, social capital works to explain elements of both.

"Capital refers to the economic resources an individual or group accumulates over time. Capital can be acquired, spent, exchanged, increased, depleted, lost or recaptured due to its communal and relational nature" (Tierney, 2006, p. 23). Capital is exchanged between members of a defined group, such as the status groups in high school. This

student-owned capital includes what they have and —more importantly — *what* and

who they know. What they know refers to the norms, rituals, and lifestyle (dress, music,

food, romance, leisure time activities), which is crucial to membership. Who they know

refers to the group membership and its affiliates. This knowing comes with status

and privileges of belonging and permission to identify with the group. Members can

exchange what they have and what they know between each other.

One could think of student social capital as a card that students carry, proving

membership, and used as a debit card to give and get what they need and to accomplish

specific goals. In a pro-school group, that card could be used to get notes from a class

they missed or other information pertinent to school achievement. In the anti-school

group, it may be used to get information on where the skip-out party is that afternoon.

As Tierney (2006, p. 27) suggests, "Membership in the group has social obligations that

enable benefits to the individual such as a credential."

Does this form of social capital give this subculture power and influence over other

groups or adults in the building? The answer could be "yes" if one of the group's goals

is to add members. For example, if the anti-school group can add ten more students this

year, that is ten less students attending classes, blocking the goals of the adult group.

This concept of social capital helps inform this thesis in the area of how groups

work and why they do what they do. The elements of trust and reciprocity are

important to understanding first how groups like the Anti-School Kids operate

within the school and secondly, may shed some understanding on the interpersonal

relationships with the adults who direct the learning.

How does social capital work for, or more accurately, against marginalized youth? As will be explained further in Chapter Two, the social capital that exists between members is not useful currency in terms of material gain i.e. jobs or educational credentials. "To climb the economic ladder one must forego the familial and communal associations that presumably generate social capital" (Tierney, 2006, p. 29). This statement may mean that members of the anti-school subculture would have to leave comfort of their group if they desired to move up the economic ladder.

Anti-School Kids would have to forego their relationships with their peers in order to benefit from the social capital of Pro-School Kids. This thesis supports the theory that as long as Anti-School Kids remain identified with their group, they will be the victims of the negative effects of social capital "for low-income, oppressed groups [social capital] is really a manner of social control through downward leveling norms" (Tierney, 2006, p. 29). These marginalized students are on a lower level and their collective social capital does not have enough value outside their subculture to allow them any economic power.

The social time this group shares is when the lack of money can be observed by anyone, even teachers who do not know those students. Anti-school group members may depend on each other for daily living necessities such as food, clothing, shelter and transportation (bus money) as well as emotional support and simple living direction and advice. Their lack of money is evident in their choice of used clothing, hairstyle,

hygiene, food (definitely not from Canada's Food Guide), sleeping arrangements (up after midnight, irregular hours, broken sleep from home disturbances, couch surfing) and general day-to-day living habits. Again, the question is: Is it cyclical? Do they choose these forms of identity (so that they can clearly advertise: *I am not mainstream, I am Anti-School*) or are they simply a product of their marginalized status? Therefore, their material circumstances have a direct and demonstrative effect of the defining features of their subculture.

So why should educators care about subcultures, particularly the Anti-School Kids? "Semi-autonomous youth cultures distract students from school material, encourage them to be less deferential to teachers and preoccupy them with peer life. It is one of the cultural dynamics of modern schooling" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 207). The research instrument is designed to find some answers to the question: Do the actions of the anti-school subculture detract adult and student energy away from the core business of learning — focusing on behaviours, norms, dress — and interfering with graduating? The Mission Gardens School Division (MGSD) attempts to deal with such groups by devising new alternative programs, designed to meet the needs of at-risk and marginalized students. This study intends to examine three school division affiliated programs within the MGSD and three programs which are not affiliated with a school division.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research project is to examine the relational aspects of alternative education programs which serve students in the anti-school subculture who have not been successful in regular high schools. The research instrument has been designed to help identify what works in these particular environments to help youth learn. Some of the results may be transferable to help engage marginalized youth within mainstream institutions. The resulting data may reveal practical applications from those alternative programs that can be used in the traditional high school classrooms to increase these students' chance of graduation. Or it may show more alternative programs are needed, particularly if the Manitoba government raises the legal school-leaving age to 18. Varied opinions exist as to what works for students who demonstrate anti-school behaviour, particularly concerning how to reach them through interpersonal relationships rather than through content. The data will tell the story of these six programs.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the fact that there were no interviews of mainstream classroom teachers. That being said, I believe most educators could agree that mainstream is the norm with widely recognized practices that can be compared without being represented by a participant. Also, two of the school division affiliated alternative program teachers, as well as the researcher, have been practicing mainstream teachers.

They were able to provide implied comparisons without separating the data.

The second limitation is the fact the researcher has only taught in one school within the Mission Gardens School Division, limiting her observation and experiences primarily to that school. Thirdly, the researcher's bias in choosing the participants must be noted. These people are linked to the researcher in some fashion, as they are not strangers.

As for the reliability of this study, which can be looked in terms of whether another researcher independently studying the same setting or subjects would come up with the same findings, this would depend on if the same questions were asked. I believe that the subjects' experiences and answers are authentic — independent from this project — and even if another researcher asked differently worded questions, the answers would be similar. It is worth noting that Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that qualitative researchers do not share this expectation and it is not necessary to consider the study reliable.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of Chapter 1 has been to provide an overview of the issues relating to the research problem and to introduce core concepts. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to review the related literature to both the research problem and the conceptual framework of social bonds, group identity and social capital as it relates to anti-school subcultures and their disengagement with mainstream schooling. The literature

review includes information on how the institution of school can work for and against

marginalized youth, as well as examining social factors within the school organization

which may prevent these students from being a part of it. Chapter 2 concludes with

introducing the details about school division affiliated and non-affiliated alternative

program descriptions, which offer a different environment for learning to the Anti-

School Kids.

Chapter 3 focuses on the study's methodology, beginning with a background to

the study. The research questions will be explained along with information about the

participants.

Chapter 4 will reveal the results of the six interviews and will provide information

about what the problems and challenges are for engaging the Anti-School Kids

and what solutions have worked in those alternative programs, in comparison to

mainstream schooling. References will be made to the research of Eith and Wyn and

White.

Chapter 5's discussion will involve the conclusions of the study, synthesized

with the conclusion of Cassie's story. The themes of caring, consistency, timeliness

and prioritizing will be presented as key observations. The chapter concludes with

recommendations for further study and best practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews relevant sociological literature on the social dynamics of the youth experience, social capital and the theory of social control, youth subcultures and subculture theorists, youth identities and associations, and marginality of youth in society and schools. Information is presented about school division affiliated and non-school division affiliated alternative education programs. This thesis begins by acknowledging the problems marginalized youth have both in and out of school, then exploring how this may lead to membership in an anti-school subculture. Next, the chapter discusses why Anti-School Kids disengage from mainstream schools, and how, by adopting alternative program methods, these schools might be able to engage them more effectively.

The literature review includes information on how marginality and subculture membership interferes with school success, and why young peoples' associations and social bonds to school matter. The researcher also reviewed sources concerned with how social control theory and other sociological theories influence groups and power in terms of school success or failure. The review identifies institutional factors which may create barriers for students and why that is a problem, particularly with marginalized youth.

Underlying Chapter Two is the notion of choice. The review of the literature

seeks answers to this pivotal question: Do delinquent youth choose their path or

is it pre-determined by social factors? Do these social factors — which influence

identity formation in adolescents — and institutional factors combine to work against

individual freedom of choice? Can the association between social class and educational

attainment be clearly identified? What are the responsibilities of their families? What

is the significance of a youth's socioeconomic circumstances? What can alternative and

mainstream school programs do to counteract the failure of these students?

It is the aim of this study to reveal concrete solutions for educators of the

marginalized school population in order to raise graduation rates or lead these students

to gainful employment or training. This thesis may show that this can be done through

individualized alternative programming, or at least targeted interventions, even within

mainstream schooling.

Marginality in the Community

The community is where marginalization takes place. Though Wyn and White

(2008) are primarily concerned with school-age youth in their research, they offer the

most succinct definition of marginality as it applies to wider society outside of schools:

> Marginality, as a result of privatization of services and the introduction
>
> of user-pays services, is constituted through permanent part-time work,
>
> seasonal or irregular employment combined with unemployment,
>
> minimum or substandard conditions at, near, or even below the poverty

line, short-term contract employment, and accelerated reductions in the

social wage. (p. 21)

Marginality begins in the basic areas of human lives: employment, which is linked to education and work experience, and then food, clothing, shelter and transportation. This translates into economic marginalization. A student's socioeconomic status includes these factors and therefore determines his/her marginalization before s/he enters the school system.

Marginalized youth can best be defined as follows, summarized by the researcher and repeated from Chapter One: When members of a specific and identifiable group of people demonstrate in an observable way that they have less access or are denied to _____, then they are termed marginalized. This blank could be , knowledge, power, status — any number of commodities of value available our society, including education.

The next area is social marginalization. Social marginalization is characterized by existing outside the dominant culture, in areas of rituals, social mores, daily habits, language, and behaviours demonstrating particular norms, values and beliefs. Economically marginalized youth can also be socially marginalized, but each category has distinct characteristics. There are also physical attributes which reflect a person's social and/or economic status, as illustrated in the continuation of Cassie's story:

Cassie wears her long, straight hair in a braid down the middle of her back.

She tops it off with a bandana and a trucker cap, worn backwards. This mocks

Aboriginal gang headgear, in turn mimicking African-American hip-hop/gang

culture. She has ear spacers and a barbell piercing in her eyebrow. She is quite

masculine-looking and it is obvious she is of Aboriginal heritage. When you get

closer to Cassie, you realize that she does not have good personal hygiene habits

and emanates an unpleasant odour. She wears runners, sweats and a basketball

jersey over a hoodie. None of these characteristics link her to the dominant culture

or mainstream group in her high school. From top to bottom, Cassie demonstrates

characteristics of an economically and socially marginalized youth. She is also a

member of the Anti-School Kids, but that can only be confirmed by her behaviour

in actions and words.

As Wink (2000) explains, "To marginalize is to place someone or something on the fringes, on the margins of power. To be marginalized is to be made to feel less. Sometimes teachers marginalize specific groups of students" (p. 62). Marginalized youth and adults in the wider community are on the low-end of the power structure in society. Within schools, economically and socially marginalized youth are also low in the hierarchy of power, both within their student groups and in their relationships with the adults in the building.

Characteristics of Marginalized Youth

In this research, it is important to understand the characteristics of marginalized

youth are supported by the data found under the heading "Inner City Criteria",

according to the data found on the Winnipeg School Division web site, under the

category of School Demographics, 2007/2008 (www.wsd1.org). The researcher uses

these as *sample* categories, not directly using this data. The categories include: number

of parents in the household, stability, mobility, median family income, low-income

cutoff, and parents having less than a grade 9 education. All of these factors contribute

to a student's socioeconomic status, which determines or helps identify those who are

economically marginalized.

In addition to these criteria, a teacher could also come to some conclusions

regarding a student's marginalized status by these additional factors: child not living

with either parent (officially not in custody of either parent/family member); youth

living in a family with income less than the low-income cutoff (LICO), household

employment status, housing location and status.

Another term which could suit marginalized youth is the 'subaltern'. Apple and

Buras (2006) explain that "the concept has played a key role in our understanding of

and struggles against relations of domination and subordination…in education, we

want to show how dominance and subalternity mix and mingle, forming a tangled

web of interrelations based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion,

language, and local, national, and global affiliations" (p. 9). It is easy to understand that

within a school setting, the power to direct the day-to-day operations of the process

of education lie with the adults and the students who are on the receiving end of this

power relationship. Those who are marginalized will have little power in this scenario.

Is it possible that the concept of subaltern helps explain why these students end up as part of the anti-school subculture? They are in need of some type of power, and if they are socially and economically marginalized, they can look to peers within the group of Anti-School Kids to finally have some influence within the school setting dominated by adults.

Characteristics of the Anti-School Kids

The Anti-School Kids construct an outward appearance and establish a real culture among themselves. It is important in this thesis, therefore, to establish a clear definition of what is meant by the term "culture". Hall and Jefferson (1993) state it best as,

> We understand the word 'culture' to refer to that level at which social
> groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to
> their social and *material* life-experience.…The 'culture' of a group or
> class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of the group or class, the
> meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations,
> in systems of beliefs in mores and customs, in the uses of objects and
> material life. (p.4)

Willis (1977) used the term 'counter-school culture', showing within the term itself that members of the culture needed school so they had something to 'counter'. The researcher makes the parallel observation that the Anti-School Kids are partially

defined in their meanings *only* in relation to other cultures (such as Pro-School). Hall

and Jefferson (1993) concur when they state that "…the fact that cultures always stand

in relations of domination — and subordination — to one another, are always, in some

sense, in struggle with one another" (p.6). It is easy to see how this is mirrored in public

schools.

The book *Resistance through Rituals* examines youth cultures also in terms of power

— who has, and who has not. "But the structures and meanings which most adequately

reflect the position and interests of the most powerful class — however complex it is

internally — will stand in relation to all the others as a dominant social-cultural order.

The dominant culture represents itself as *the* culture. It tries to define and contain all

other cultures within its inclusive range" (Hall and Jefferson, 1993, p. 5).

Translated to high school life, this power concept can be represented as a pyramid,

as illustrated in Figure 1 on page 3. In the figure, the dominant culture class is shown to

be the base from which all other classes grow. Even though the marginalized class is at

the top, it is the weakest in terms of power so therefore, it takes up the smallest space

in the pyramid. As Hall and Jefferson (1993) stated, the dominant class represents itself

as *the* culture, as in 'the one and the only', to which everything else is relative. As the

diagram illustrates, the dominant culture class defines and contains all the other classes

as they rank in whiteness, socioeconomic status, and their level of social and economic

marginalization.

This study will be informed by teachers who interact with students from each

level of the pyramid, and the data may attest to the fact that each group's identity is

linked to the other. This could be demonstrated by concrete school behaviours that are

characteristics of the groups. Hall and Jefferson (1993) comment that the "meanings,

values and ideas embodied" by that class can be observed in the "uses of objects and

material life." In the case of high school students, the objects and possessions such

as cell phones and iPods and their clothing and accessories are expressions of their

material life and hence their identity.

If they did not have the other classes and cultures to compare themselves to, how

would they establish markers of their identity? Particularly, with the Anti-School Kids,

if they did not have the Asian and White dominant cultures which tend to be Pro-

School, how would they establish themselves as the counter-culture? Here we can see

how Hall and Jefferson's (1993) theory about how dominant and subordinate cultures

always struggle with one another play out in high school groups. How else could they

establish their identities? It is ironic that the classes need each other in order to establish

their independence and distinctiveness.

The researcher also observes from her teaching experience that the students need

the adults in the building to contrast with; they must look differently, speak differently

and behave differently, again to establish their identity as students. Milner (2004) offers

the following categories when explaining teens' behaviour: clothes and style, speech

and language, rituals, body language and demeanor, popular music, dancing and

singing, phones, backpacks and cars. Most educators will recognize these markers and

may agree that students strive to be very different from adults in all of these categories.

Institutional Influences on Youth Identity and Engagement

What does the school experience of marginalized youth actually look like? How do their days play out within the school walls? Why do Anti-School Kids even stay in school without making any progress? What can Manitoba high schools do with these social groups such as the Anti-School Kids who stall out at grade 10 and cannot achieve the credits needed to move forward? The researcher observes that school starts to be like a treadmill and frustrations mount for both staff and those affected students. These students' anti-school behaviours affect their performance and their school experience as well as that of their peers, particularly other struggling students. To see Cassie come late day after day, not engage in the assignments, to be marking up her tables and locker with graffiti all combine to have a negative effect on those students around her. One may attempt to dilute and deflect such behaviours within the regular mainstream classroom or Cassie could be removed and placed into alternative programming on or off-campus.

However, there are long waiting lists for off-campus and alternative programs, so the majority of Anti-School Kids have no choice but to try to navigate their way through regular high school. There, they remain in a holding pattern where neither party can afford to let go but they do not know how to break the pattern of failure. According to Barakett and Cleghorn (2000): "Schooling can also be said to have a custodial function,

reinforced through a variety of laws which place a legal responsibility on the school and

on teachers to substitute for parents (*in loco parentis*) during the school day" (p. 8).

The custodial function is an element of modern schooling that often gets in the

way of student success in the bigger picture of life or the ability to move forward in

another direction. The fact is that the legal age for leaving school in Manitoba is 16. If a

student is 15 and in grade 10 and demonstrates complete failure in areas of attendance,

achievement and attitude/behaviour, the school is compelled to continue to work with

that student in a myriad of ways. For example, take the case of Jackson:

> *Jackson is a 15-year-old student who came to the Graphic Design vocational*
>
> *program at IAC at the grade 10 level but did not have any grade 9 credits because*
>
> *of his attendance patterns. He comes to class on average once a week and when*
>
> *he arrives, he is either angry or sullen. He has done five of the 30 assignments at*
>
> *the mid-point in the year. The teacher discusses his situation with the guidance*
>
> *counselor and recommends that he be given a new timetable, formulated for*
>
> *Jackson, that focuses on the core subjects, dropping the vocational program and his*
>
> *option courses. The counselor understands why this should be done but will not*
>
> *do it. She explains that the school has sent out attendance letters to his guardians*
>
> *and there has been no response. The school must wait for action to be initiated*
>
> *by them. Because Jackson is 15, he can not be withdrawn from any of his courses*
>
> *without written parental/guardian consent.*

In effect, his registration at the school back in August acts as a caretaking

mechanism, and to record his presence or absence — marking his existence in this

schooled society. It becomes the teacher's job, *in loco parentis*, to make notes for some

disconnected 'authority' regarding Jackson's non-participation in school.

The first problem with this function is that such records may be accurate for the most part, but are far from reliable, as it is entered by a human being. The second issue, with having to hold on to students like Jackson, is that schools are effectively preventing them from reformulating a new plan and moving on with their lives. It may also be a mistake to wait for the parent or guardian to take action as they have already proven ineffective in this role. The counselor and the teacher — acting as Jackson's guardians — would be the best people to come up with a new plan with the student, from an educational standpoint.

Because Industrial Arts Collegiate is not a semestered school, at the end of January, Jackson has less than 25% in each of his subjects. It is easy to predict that he will not get any credits this year. If his social needs were assessed and it was decided that he would fit in the nearby semestered school, he could register there in a least two of the core subjects (such as Math and English). This would give Jackson the chance to salvage at least that for his grade 10 year. It would give him a fresh opportunity and force him out of his rut of non-achievement and non-attendance that becomes a cycle which sooner or later must be broken. But, school staff do not have this authority without parental involvement, so are they really *in loco parentis,* or much, much less than that?

If Jackson did make the move to the semestered school and could not function there either, then his school "custodians" have done their job. Another solution can then be explored, such as the many alternative programs offered on-campus at Industrial Arts

Collegiate. Before describing how they function and how Jackson might succeed with the help of those teachers, a few more questions should be asked about this custodial function, also known as warehousing. Does the practice of warehousing students contribute to the hostile environment that creates conflicts between school staff and the anti-school subculture? Does it contribute to the formation of subcultures such as the Anti-School Kids? These questions are explored in the next section.

Institutional Influences on Youth Group Membership

What does this warehousing look like? According to Davies & Guppy, "Age-graded schools are both mandatory, yet not overly challenging" (2006, p. 206). Creating an anti-school subculture becomes an unintended function of schooling. Davies & Guppy (2006) also comment on custodial function:

> With high schools being transformed into 'custodial' institutions that
> 'warehouse' many non-academically-inclined youth, [starting in the 50s]
> schools were increasingly portrayed as hostile places that bred alienation
> and aimlessness…[and] schools are ultimately run by adults. Thus,
> having spare time and money when lacking power, fuels an acute status
> consciousness among youth. Teens have only enough control to invent
> their own social realm within schools. (2006, p. 206)

It may go without saying that the social realm they create will not be compatible with the one the adults in the building and the wider community would like to see.

What we end up with are a number of social groups as illustrated in Figure 1 on page 3.

The next observation by Davies & Guppy (2006) is also made by Dwyer and Wyn (2001) as the root reason for subculture formation and counter-school behaviour and attitudes. "…School deviance was a symptom of schools' own selection function… [that] an antagonistic relationship was built into the structure of schooling. … [and] that hierarchical grading and streaming systems created disincentives for unsuccessful students" (p. 208).

It is easy to see that in the case of Jackson, there are few incentives for him to change his functioning. He obviously does not know how to navigate school and has found himself at the bottom of the hierarchy. He has either been socialized or chosen not to value achievement in school, and it may be that his guardians/parents share this opinion, so that is not a motivator for him to engage. And if those in contact with Jackson do not help him instigate change in his life, he will also find himself at the bottom of society's hierarchy in terms of socioeconomic status.

"In a society increasingly structured like a contest for economic status and social climbing, schools had the job of rewarding only *some* students, while deeming many as academically unfit or unwilling, labeled as 'underachiever' or 'failures'.…This process, the subcultural theorists argued, inflicted a sort of emotional injury on these students and gave them a hunger for a more positive self-image" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 208). They may find what they need in the anti-school subculture. This question then arises: if the Anti-School Kids have decided to regard schooling as worthless, is there

anything specific in alternative programming that can counter this attitude and belief

and possibly redefine educational goals to fit marginalized youth?

The Social Identity of Marginalized Youth

How would culture be imagined by people outside the school system, as seen by

those who are not familiar with the different classes and groups within a high school?

Would their definitions include how the students smile at each other? What they eat

for lunch? The point is, high school is a distinct culture, with its own identity within

the wider society. Wyn and White focus on "youth 'cultural' activities [which] equal

ways of interacting, speaking, dressing" (p. 72). For example, the way that members

of a certain group greet each other in the hallway — including hand gestures, facial

expression, words exchanged and any physical contact, signify markers of their culture.

All of these combine as the social identity of youth.

Wyn and White (1997) argue that "culture can be seen to refer to distinct patterns

of life and the ways in which social groups give expression to their social and material

life experience." And more importantly, "How young people experience life is thus

a communal cultural process, one forged in association with family, friends and

significant others in their lives" (p. 73).

Why do youth want to belong to a specific group? Group membership is part, and

sometimes a very large part, of a high school student's identity. Because this thesis is

concerned with group memberships, the research focuses on social identity. In the book

Rethinking Youth, Wyn and White (1997) state that "social identity is negotiated in the context of family and social institutions (like school)" (p. 73).

Wyn and White (1997) then add the dimension of goals to class which also concerns groups in high school. "The process whereby an apparent consensus is established within a society about its own identity and goals, according to which people are encouraged to measure their own sense of belonging and personal fulfillment is represented as the 'dominant culture'"(p. 74). This thesis supports the belief that students' social identity is largely determined by their position in the Class-Culture Pyramid (Figure 1), and hence their goals are determined by which group they belong to.

The daily goals of each of these groups within Figure 1 will vary, and it may help members of the school staff to be aware of this. For example, the goals of members of a marginalized group, or particularly the Anti-School Kids, will differ from each of the other classes/groups. An Asian may come to school intending to ace a test so it will add to the 80% average he's hoping to achieve that term. One of the Lost Kids (who does not live with any family member) may have the goal of receiving free breakfast or one of the Smokers may have the goal of 'bumming' two smokes that day. Members measure their sense of belonging with the group according to how their goals match with the other members'. Their achievement of those goals will help rank them in order of importance within the peers of that group. It is possible that if the teachers recognize the groups' goals, they can deal more effectively with the behaviours which result from

trying to achieve their goals.

In terms of hierarchy, here is reinforcement of the concept that the dominant culture in a high school sets the standard reality against which all other cultures are compared. Those who belong to the dominant culture engage in the "…production of specific meanings and ideas (which) in turn is linked to the efforts and activities of the most powerful groups and classes in society to shape conceptions of reality to reflect their interests…this process is called cultural hegemony"(Wyn and White, 1997, p. 74). This idea goes back to the hierarchy of power and how cultures are locked in a relationship of subordination and domination.

Returning to the social identity of high school students, besides the social group and socioeconomic class, what are some other factors that shape that identity? Wyn and White (1997) explain that: "A person's identity as an 'Aussie' for instance is shaped by factors such as ethnic background, class background and gender. Social acceptance at the immediate level of home, neighbourhood, and work relationships is conditioned by how well we fit into the values and traditions of particular categories and groups of people" (p. 74). Youth identity then is affected greatly by the group they are immersed in, and who they associate with.

Associations Which Influence Youth Group Membership

Parsons (2007) wrote about the function of the elementary school classroom in *School Class*, where he branches into the subject of voluntary associations. Parsons

(2007) says, "the peer group may be regarded as a field for the exercise of independence

from adult control. Of course, when children are say 8-years-old, the opportunity for

associating with peers is still strongly linked to school [your class or school-anchored

play periods] and to the family [areas adjacent to the child's home]" (p. 43). What

develops out of these peer associations is critical to both members of marginalized

youth groups and the anti-school subculture. The research questions that guide this

study are designed to probe any links between associations of marginalized youths and

those youths' membership in an anti-school subculture.

Parsons (2007) goes on to explore more specific behaviour and the reason young

people engage in anti-school behaviour, in particular. He says that:

> the peer group engages in behaviour which goes beyond independence
>
> from adults to the range of adult-disapproved behaviour (with) the
>
> extremists going over into delinquency. But another very important
>
> function is to provide the child with a source of non-adult approval and
>
> acceptance. …Thus the adult parents are augmented by age-peers as a
>
> source of rewards for performance and of security in acceptance. (p. 43)

Eith (2005) supports this view when she states: "As peers become more salient in the

lives of children, their social bonds to peers become stronger and the norms and values

of these peers will be increasingly important" (p. 20).

What happens when parents, whom Parsons (2007) calls "generation-supervisors",

are removed and the young person's main source of approval and acceptance are his/

her 'status-equals'? . If there has been a major separation between the youth and her parents, and she becomes marginalized, she will still have a relationship with the adults in the school. The teachers should, in theory, become more important in her life due to the lack of adult contact but they may also reject her due to her membership in the anti-school subculture. Eith (2005) believes that "delinquency is a group activity…peers are able to influence juveniles in a way that no parent or authority figure can" (p. 21). The conundrum is that this presents an unfortunate position for that student to be in — once again illustrating that the concept of limited choices of these marginalized youth must be recognized.

The Many Losses of Marginalized Youth

This is the vicious circle that leaves these students vulnerable and unable to fully participate in the education system or secure any type of employment. Alienation builds on alienation and they are only left with peers for support in all aspects of their day-to-day existence (food, clothing, shelter; and emotional, psychological and sociological needs). This alienation feeds their sense of belonging within the anti-school subculture in which they remain until they are older and then move into a new but similar subculture, without any ties to school and therefore, fewer ties to society.

If Anti-School Kids cannot use other group members to gain economic advantage, can they look to any adult groups, either inside or outside of the school for support? Due to weakened family bonds and school behaviours in school aggression and verbal

abuse, these students may have no significant adults in their lives. This obviously

further hampers their economic status and also creates challenges when they try to

secure part-time employment. Simply put, they lack connections to legitimate networks

and this prevents them from gaining some independence that comes with employment.

Will their economic circumstances persist in the cycle as long as their membership

in the subculture and the marginalized group does? "The underclass is not simply

marginal to the labour market; it is excluded from the labour market — by virtue

of family history, structural restrictions on education and job choices, geographical

location, racial and ethnic segregation, stigmatised individual and community

reputation, and so on" (Wyn and White, 2008, p. 21). This template may fit with

marginalized youth in high school, who are excluded from the benefit of a Grade

12 education first, then the labour market second. They arrive at the school already

marginalized and the school keeps them in that category and they are eventually turned

over to the labour market which treats them in this manner.

Here the author found among the literature what may be the true nature of loss for

marginalized youth — their potential. Lamoureux (2006) expresses the heartbreaking

reality: "[these] are young people whose well-being and fulfillment is jeopardized

by life circumstances, emotional, physical, and/or social challenges. Not limited to

ethnicity or affluence, at-risk youth are simply children in danger of never having the

opportunity to actualize to their full potential" (p. 12).

Is it possible that students who are already marginalized and low achievers detach

from the teacher and school due to the expectations of academic achievement which

they cannot meet? Do they reject the teacher and everything she represents because

the teacher has in essence rejected her because of her low achievement levels? Does the

student tell herself: "Aha, another adult who doesn't love me because I am not smart

enough"?

Stevens (1999) describes in great detail the relationships or ties that socially

marginalized youth have, or more accurately, do *not* have. He distinguishes between the

marginalized groups referred to in this thesis and the groups which are not connected

to any institution including school or the workplace. Though the group featured in

this study is socially marginalized, the members are still integrated or connected to

the dominant culture; there are still ties to the parent culture. However, the anti-school

subculture members could, and some do, end up out of their group and completely cut

off, thereby putting them at risk of perils such as homelessness. Some of the issues this

socially marginalized group shares with the Anti-School Kids deserve a closer look.

> Socially marginalized youth often have weakened or severed family
>
> and social ties. Cut off from families and the larger society in which
>
> they live, these youth have little or no system of social protection.
>
> The social support they receive is usually from peers living in similar
>
> circumstances. (http://www.pathfind.org)

The marginalized youth who remain in school at least have access to social services

which may provide protection within that system. For example, regardless of a

student's academic status in a class, the teacher has the same duty of care for her as the rest of the students. If the teacher sees she is a victim of abuse (mental, physical, sexual) or neglect or may be pregnant or suffering from drug or alcohol abuse or in need of food or clothing, help can be accessed for her through school resources.

Marginalized and street-involved youth have one thing in common: "they share a risky and precarious life characterized by poverty, residential instability…they often struggle at school with mental illness as well as with drug and alcohol problems" (http://www.frontlinehealth.ca). These are vulnerable youth who need the help of adult educators. Unfortunately, such adolescents "are characterized as difficult, moody, rebellious, and disdainful of adult authority. Many adults are uncomfortable working with them. With much of urban violence being attributed to adolescents, they are also now seen as dangerous" (http://www.frontlinehealth.ca). This means that they are often rejected by adults, leaving only the support of their peers.

Those students who are also members of the anti-school subculture like these socially marginalized youth also receive support from peers in like situations but of course these would be limited resources compared to what the school and its supporting organizations (i.e. Child Guidance Clinic) can provide. However, these youth may be more open to receiving "a little" from peers as opposed to "a lot" from school, the institution which they have fundamentally rejected.

Stevens (1999) points out the sad fact that "…lack of family and social ties can be worsened by social stigmas" (http://www.pathfind.org). These youth may be part of

one or more of the following socially marginalized sub-groups: a) ethnic, national or religious minorities; b) migrants, immigrants, war-affected children; c) street children/ the homeless who are often viewed as nuisances or criminals; or d) homosexual youth facing discrimination or repression.

This leads to the second and third components which influence a young person's social identity — gender and ethnicity. According to Wyn and White (1997), "the idea of a youth culture is problematic insofar as it is seen to somehow exist over and above any difference associated with class, ethnicity and gender" (p. 75). A review of the literature concerning the dimension of ethnicity follows.

Ethnic Influences on Youth Group Membership

In discussing the characteristics of marginalized youth, ethnicity does have to be acknowledged. However, it is not a specific ethnicity that is common among marginalized youth nor is it hinging on a specific skin colour or country of origin; it may be the simple fact of being an involuntary racial minority. Davies & Guppy (2006) report that, "minority groups experience school differently and that the same ethno-racial groups can perform differently in different national contexts. For instance, Asian immigrants have almost invariably performed very well in North American schools, while African Americans in the U.S. and Aboriginals in Canada have had much less success" (p. 212).

Further: "… Any understanding of minority student subcultures must take into

account historical legacies of relations between minorities and the majority group within any particular society. The histories of some groups make them reluctant to abide the dominant culture that exists in public schools. Racial minorities approach social institutions based on their collective experience of incorporation in the host nation" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 212). In Winnipeg, pubic educators should recognize that the Aboriginal residential school history makes this group reluctant to become members of the dominant culture and therefore of the Pro-School Kids (refer to Figure 1). The Filipino students, on the other hand, are members of a voluntary minority and tend to interact differently with the dominant culture.

The following situation described by Davies & Guppy (2006) is comparable to what is known to occur in the Mission Gardens School Division:

> Aboriginal children and their families experienced residential schooling largely as an act of cultural aggression and as a disintegrating force on Native communities and families. Public schooling, until recently, served to eradicate their local language, customs, and traditions and to enforce English language and Christian religion. Thus…an involuntary minority like Canadian Aboriginals will approach mass public education with some suspicion, and its youth may even regard it as an only slightly veiled attempt to neutralize their distinctive cultural community and practices. (p. 212)

The researcher is most interested in the last comment, as it relates to Aboriginal

membership in the Anti-School Kids: "… cultural legacies can encourage involuntary minority students to form oppositional subcultures that take a particular 'racialized' form.…The key is that these student subcultures make it difficult for youth to separate those behaviours that breed academic success from those that can harm their cultural identity" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 213). Anti-school behaviour can prevent Aboriginal students from graduating, perhaps believing they are acting within their cultural norms.

In *Critical Literacy*, Morrell (2008) reinforces the dimension of ethnicity in marginalization. "Multiculturalists (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1992) have argued that traditional academic instruction can alienate and exclude members of culturally marginalized groups. Even though these students may acquire literacy, they do so at a great cost of losing the opportunity to learn about their own culture or the cultures of other marginalized groups. This lack of representation can decrease motivation and achievement while leading to resistance, apathy, and dropping out" (p. 3).

Morrell also delves into the idea that students who don't belong to the dominant culture and who have literacy based on an 'other' ethnicity are often discounted and marginalized in mainstream schools which are geared to the dominant culture.

> …Students who are labeled by schools as illiterate or semi-literate
>
> partake in vibrant and sophisticated language and literacy practices
>
> that they learn and utilize in non-school settings as they participate in
>
> everyday sociocultural activity (Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984).

As such, these students are treated as deficits when educators would be better served to brainstorm how to make meaningful links between their local language and literacy practices and the literacies needed to more effectively navigate discourses of power. (Morrell, 2008, p. 3-4)

This study will report the participants' thoughts on recognizing different types of literacies aside from those belonging to the dominant culture, as part of the solution to some of the problems faced by marginalized students. It has already been noted that because those outside the dominant culture do not know the language, they are at a disadvantage when trying to assert power in the school setting.

Also, even if a student is a member of the dominant culture, being new to a school will also put him or her at the bottom of the hierarchy, as expressed in the book *Don't Teach the Canaries not to Sing.* Ramsey relays the story of how he moved to a large city and a much larger school mid-year:

I felt lost and overwhelmed. I didn't know how to fit in. I didn't know the unwritten rules and roles, the insider jokes, the code words, or the secret handshake. I didn't know the history, the traditions, the stories, the heroes, the values, the taboos, or the boundaries. I soon learned that the pecking order of the culture relegated newcomers to a marginal role in the life of the school. (Ramsey, 2008, p. xiii)

Characteristics of Past Anti-School Subcultures

To better understand today's youth subcultures, one must look back in time to the formation of the youth culture, and therefore, youth counter-cultures. This information provides the reader with a perspective on today's 'youth crisis' to look back at the history of troubled youth in schools. Considering the moral panics caused by these subcultures, it is interesting to see they had a similar effect in 1959 as they do today, although one may have the opinion that it was scarier to face these youth in 1959 because educators had fewer references to help deal with them.

In the *Language of Youth Subcultures*, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) clearly lay out the history of youth subcultures, using physical descriptions which help place each group they discuss. "The first post-war, high-visibility working class subculture was the Teddy Boys. Their music was rock n' roll. Teds are significant because the way society in general reacted to them set the scene for public, media and academic concern with subsequent youth cultures" (p. 8).

The part of that work which is particularly relevant to this study was what the public believed were the reasons for this youth rebelliousness:

> Academic explanations include the country not being what it used to be in terms of global economy and status, negative childhood wartime experiences such as absent fathers and then contemporary social ills such as boredom in an affluent society, the breakdown of the family and traditional authority patterns, materialism, too much sex, and so on.

(Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, p. 8)

This sounds rather familiar, echoing the public concerns that the media reports about the youth subcultures today.

One passage describes how the Teddy Boys puts educators' fears in perspective: "The Teddy Boy was a symbol of what was going wrong with contemporary society. He was an example of adult mistakes in human form" (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995, p. 9). It is common to see educators and parents take on this responsibility — that somehow youth misbehaviour is a direct result of their action or inaction. The road to becoming a teenager is a multi-layered and complex path, and has more to do with creating a social identity than what is at the core of that teenager's being. It may be that educators take the behaviour, dress, music and language of such subcultures much too seriously; yes, they are anti-adult but it seems overly harsh to refer to them as "adult mistakes in human form".

After the shock of the Teddy Boys, events seem to get worse. The 1960s saw the emergence of subcultures such as the Mods, the Rockers and the Skinheads. They shared characteristics of the Teddy Boys but the clothes and music had evolved. "The Mods and Rockers were widely cast in the role of folk devils and became the focus for the expression of many anxieties in the parent society and culture…(they) were associated with mob violence, viewed as a manifestation of a new mindless group orientation. Moreover, the association between delinquency and working class youth subcultures was again reinforced" (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995, p. 10). When these

authors say these subcultures became the focus of the expression of many anxieties,
the connection can be seen to today's Anti-School Kids. Even though a majority of the
youth will grow out of this social identity, educators become so concerned because
these kids have stolen adult values and inverted them. Educators and parents claim
such behaviours and attitudes will irrevocably harm them, but maybe it is the adults
who are actually concerned about being hurt.

It can be said that it was the Punks who really raised those fears in the adults as
they were too obtuse to be ignored. Their music was crazier, their language downright
disturbing and their behaviour and attitudes were belligerent and raunchy. The 1970s
brought the Punk movement. "Punk emerged as the major deviant youth subculture of
the time…Newspapers quickly incorporated punk into their headlines and wrote of a
menacing new cult which threatened to corrupt the nation's youth. Punk was identified
with vulgarity, violence, venereality (sexual indulgence) and intellectual vacancy
(Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995, p. 12).

Educators may recognize these Punk characteristics as similar to those subcultures
identified as marginalized in Figure 1, page 3. The researcher may even say that the
Anti-School Kids look like a more modern update of Punks. The preceding facts
demonstrate that such behaviours and characteristics are not new, they are just wearing
different clothes. Again, this raises the question of how serious the behaviour and
attitudes of these youth subcultures really are. Will they continue to be "anti-society",
"anti-education" after they leave high school and no longer need that identity?

The Class-Culture of Anti-School Subculture Members

Hall & Jefferson (1993) define subcultures in relation to class, and therefore the wider economics beyond the school walls. Accordingly, "in modern societies, the most fundamental groups are the social classes, and the major cultural configurations will be in a fundamental though often mediated way, 'class cultures'. Relative to these cultural-class configurations, subcultures are sub-sets — smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks" (1993, p. 6). This makes one wonder if the Anti-School Kids remain marginalized, socially and economically, will they remain "anti-_____" in the wider society after they complete high school?

As has already been discussed, subcultures need the other cultures to be in conflict or to be in some relationship with, whether that be one of dominance or subservience. As Hall & Jefferson (1993) suggest, "We must first see subcultures in terms of their relation to the wider class-cultural networks of which they form a distinctive part. When one examines this relationship between a subculture and the 'culture' of which it is a part, the latter is called the parent culture. This must not be confused with the particular relationship between 'youth' and their 'parents'" (p. 6).

What has to be reinforced is the importance of the material realm when defining student subcultures, as much of their identity is tied to concrete goods such as clothing. For young people, clothing is an accessible and affordable way to demonstrate the break from their parents.

Wyn and White (1997) also remind us that all descriptions of youth are bound by age: "Recognition of the existence of the individual as a social subject is essential to any discussion of youth culture. The notion of youth culture is premised upon a basic similarity in position and ideas and revolves centrally around age" (p. 75).

For the purposes of this study, the Anti-School Kids subculture is set apart from other subcultures by using another marker that Wyn and White (1997) use in *Rethinking Youth:* "Here we can make a distinction between youth subcultures which are closely tied to family background [Pro-School groups as described in the Class-Cultural Pyramid, [Figure 1] and those which express a particular distinctiveness based upon, but, separate from, the cultural and economic position of one's family [the Anti-School Kids]" (p. 75).

In the case of all the groups above the marginalized groups in the Pyramid, different ways of life involving different concepts of values, attitudes, beliefs and practices have their origins in their particular parent cultures. "…other types of subcultures (like the Anti-School Kids) appear to represent a sharper break with 'conventional' family cultural patterns and traditions. For instance, the so-called 'spectacular' youth subcultures appear to involve a dramatic deviation from the dominant styles of dress and conventional behaviour" (Wyn and White, 1997, p. 76). This can be seen in the anti-school subculture with their bandanas (do-rags) and hats, hoodies with hoods pulled over their eyes, slouch jeans and the behaviours such as fighting and vandalism. Earlier groups such as the Teddy Boys, Mods and Punks also

displayed their distinctiveness "in their appearance, language, preferred activities and friendship networks" (Wyn and White, 1997, p. 76).

Besides the material goods, clothing and these other ways of establishing their distinctiveness, Wyn and White (1997) also provide this list, with the researcher's real-school observations provided in parentheses:

- Values (peers above all else);

- Attitude (angry);

- Beliefs (don't need an education, school sucks, don't have to plan a future);

- Practices (appearance, language, behaviour, preferred activities).

Their identity, then, is a complex mesh of all of the above. As for demonstrable behaviour, a list of types of classroom misbehaviour includes the following: cutting class or being late; walking around in the class or in the hallways; speaking out of turn or disrupting instruction (disruption can be from being late); failure to follow instructions or complete the assignment; cheating. Samples of types of school misbehaviour: truancy (cutting class or being chronically late); selling drugs; bullying and fighting; gambling; gang activity (group violence); vandalism.

This discussion of the demonstrated behaviours of student subcultures presents a fundamental question: "…what are the limits of school socialization? Can peer processes undermine educational goals? Where they exist, are subcultures a response to schools' own selection and stratifying processes, or are they rooted in historical traditions that are far beyond schools' control?" (Davies & Guppy, 2006, p. 215). The the

questions facing every educator dealing with the chaos caused by subcultures might be: What role do the people who run the school have in creating these groups and how can we help these kids? How can we resolve the conflict in order to educate them, alongside every other group, as is their right? Davies & Guppy (2006) offer this reason why we do not:

> Our reading of the evidence suggests that most schools have generic forms of peer stigma against high-achieving students. As recognized by the original subculture theorists, school selection provokes from lesser-achieving students at least a mild form of antagonism. Stronger forms of opposition are rarer, and where they exist, it is difficult to characterize them as representing an essential class culture, though this may be in part a product of changing times in which fewer economic opportunities exist for school dropouts. Some today are contending that such opposition exists among some particular racial minorities… (p. 215)

In other words, the system of merit/assessment which schools are built on creates the divisions in the first place, therefore hosting the culture/counter-culture dynamic and maintaining it. However, Davies & Guppy (2006) do acknowledge the predisposed factors such as class and race which operate along with school selection.

Institutional Influences on Youth Group Membership

Wyn and White (1997) suggest that "…social identity is constructed by different

categories of young people, (but) mainstream social institutions such as schools, family

and media set parameters in the expression of these differences" (p. 76). For example,

the school administration and teachers will only tolerate a certain amount or level

of anti-school behaviours such as destruction of property or violence toward other

students. If this is necessary to the identity of those subculture members, they have to

know the limits or risk losing their membership in that group. It is important to again

note that this subculture needs to maintain a place within or some ties to a school, no

matter how tenuous, in order to continue this identity as it has to be noticed by others

who are not anti-school to be *credible*. Wyn & White (1997) support this when they

state: "Social identity tends to be constructed in the context of and in relation to the

dominant ideological processes of society" (p. 77). Subcultures can only exist in relation

to dominant cultures. They are the embodiment of hegemony.

Ballantine & Spade (2001) ask a similar question: What role does education play in

preparation for membership in a status group? This question may cause teachers to ask

themselves: Do I believe that the function of high school is to keep the high up high and

the low down low, maintaining stratification?

The discussion begins with the norms of a status group, which is similar to a

description of each of the groups within Industrial Arts Collegiate. "The basic units

of society are associational groups sharing common cultures [or subcultures]. …

they comprise all persons who share a sense of status equality based on participation

in a common culture; styles of language, tastes in clothing and decor, manners and

other ritual observances, conversational topics and styles, opinions and values, and preferences in sports, arts and media" (Ballantine & Spade, 2001, p. 47).

The author then reinforces the theory supported in this thesis that students of the anti-school subculture need to remain minimally attached to the school culture so that they can demonstrate the contrast between themselves and the mainstream. "Participation in such cultural groups gives individuals their fundamental sense of identity especially in contrast with members of other associational groups in whose everyday culture they cannot participate comfortably" (Ballantine & Spade, 2001, p. 47). Subculture members know the markers of the mainstream group, and work hard to prove that they are different from them.

The Anti-School Kids have established their identity through membership in this group — they are comfortable with the rituals, with the opinions they have formed — so what chance does a teacher have to push them away from this group, this associational group in which they are accepted and have that sense of status equality? By pushing them to take on the attitude of, for example, Pro-School Asians, a teacher would be threatening their very identity — and what does a teacher have to bargain with, besides educational attainment and future academic/employment success, which as a group they have already rejected as unimportant and of little value?

Again, the question is: What role do teachers play in reinforcing the identity of group members under his/her care? What actions do they take to stratify the group's and maintain each group's position in the hierarchy? Ballantine & Spade (2001) suggest

that: "Employers use education to select persons who have been socialized into the dominant status culture: for entrants into their own managerial ranks, into elite culture; for lower-level employees, into an attitude of respect for the dominant culture and the elite which carries it" (p. 49).

Why do students act in ways which prevent them from progressing? What or who shaped this behaviour? "Piaget states [that] our thinking processes change radically, though slowly, from birth to maturity, because we constantly strive to make sense of the world. He identified four factors — biological maturation, activity, social experiences, and equilibration — that interact to influence changes in thinking" (Woolfolk, Winne & Perry, 2000, p. 27).

The researcher focuses on Piaget's statement regarding how human development is influenced by social factors:

> As we develop, we are also interacting with the people around us … our cognitive development is influenced by *social transmission*, or learning from others. Without social transmission, we would need to reinvent all the knowledge already offered by our culture. The amount people can learn from social transmission varies according to their stage of cognitive development. (Woolfolk, Winne & Perry, 2000, p. 27)

It can be said then that adolescents have been repeatedly exposed to a multitude of sources of social transmission — good and bad. Why do Anti-School Kids spit, swear, outwardly defy authority, not follow teachers' instructions or advice, hurt other

students, not take care of themselves and generally act in ways the school defines as

defiant and abusive? They have received this information from actual people (peers and

older adults), and all of the forms of media (television, movies, video games, Internet)

available to them during their development. Can a single teacher's voice, when she is

directing students on why it is important to be on time for classes, be heard above all of

the previous collective voices? When she explains that swearing and skipping classes is

counter-productive and the basis for failure, why do the students reject her advice? Why

does her singular social transmission seem to be ignored, or rated below that of other

sources? Is it because one counter-message in the face of thousands of messages cannot

be heard, whether the receiver should be believed or not?

What about all the other agents of socialization such as family, religion, media, peers

— why does it seem they are working against the school aims? Or is it the educators

who are not cooperating with others? Is that why educators feel they are facing

delinquent behaviours alone? Have they isolated themselves?

According to Ghosh (1995), one can again look to the dominant culture for much of

the blame:

> Both social and cultural reproduction theorists saw the control of the
>
> content of socialization by the dominant culture as hegemonic (i.e.
>
> something that functions to exclude certain groups). The significance
>
> of cultural reproduction theories was that they examined the hidden
>
> curriculum as a means of cultural domination questioned the validity

of what constitutes acceptable "knowledge" and demonstrated that

knowledge is socially constructed and is, therefore, also subjective. (p. 5)

What we teach in public schools is most definitely socially constructed and if

you are not part of that social structure for whatever reason, you will not be engaged

in constructing nor understanding this knowledge. One may be a person of high

capabilities in other forms or areas of knowledge, but like those outside the dominant

culture, marginalized youth will have to struggle to be successful because they are not

privileged with this knowledge.

Ghosh (1995) delves into the issue of power and control when she states that: "In

the 1980s, an emerging critical pedagogy was based on the work of social theorists such

as John Dewey, John Childs, Paulo Friere and Antonio Gramsci. This work combines

their theories of culture, power and hegemony in defining the nature and purpose of

education. The purpose of schooling is seen as empowerment. The language of the

school, then must provide students with the skills that all students (not only those of

the dominant groups) will utilize to construct, identify meaning and value, thereby

becoming critical citizens. The focus, therefore, is on literacy and an education that

raises consciousness rather than on formal requirements" (Ghosh, 1995, p. 5).

This means _no_ to formal structured standardized worksheets and _yes_ to literacy

involving seeing, telling, relating. This observation from Ghosh reinforces the

researcher's view that it is possible to create a learning environment which transcends

power relationships, class, gender, ethnicity and socio-economics. In addition, it could

operate more on the fundamentals of home, with values of acceptance and individual

development, while focusing on critical literacies. This is an ideal world where we

could break the culture/counter-culture cycle and real learning could take place. Now

that would be the ultimate alternative program.

Morrell (2006) supports an elevated view of modern literacies: " as multiple,

situated, ideological, and tied to power relations in society"(p. 4). He summarizes one

of his main goals: "This book makes the argument that a more thorough, encompassing,

and theoretically grounded approach should center upon the acquisition and

demonstration of critical literacies" (Morrell, 2006, p. 4).

And as Hall and Jefferson state "[it is these] institutions which transmit and

reproduce 'the culture' (i.e. the dominant culture) in its dominant or 'hegemonic' form"

(1993, p. 6). Yes, Industrial Arts Collegiate, like the majority of Manitoba high schools,

is structured to serve the dominant culture to which it easily conforms. Yet it seems ill-

equipped to deal with the marginalized students, particularly the ones who form the

anti-school culture. If they display behaviours such as violence, vandalism and non-

attendance they are pushed further to the edge of existence, not brought closer where

they can feel safe, welcome and comfortable, creating a positive relationship which

encourages them to comply.

Depending on what group marginalized students align themselves with, at

some point, for a myriad of reasons, their relationship with the mainstream school is

terminated. As Stevens speculates:

The indifference or hostility with which society treats these

[marginalized] youth may further traumatize them. They may be subject

to harsh discrimination at mainstream institutions such as education,

youth clubs/teams and any workplace and in the marketplace, since

these are not valuable consumers. They may internalize society's

negative views of them, damaging their self-esteem and their ability to

have healthy relationships with others. (http://www.pathfind.org)

When Anti-School Kids Leave School

The end may be brought on by the student or the institution, but regardless of how

it occurs, it is likely to be extremely negative and signify an impasse for both parties.

As has previously been explored in this thesis, often these students have no other

adult support aside from the school, so without this connection this may be the end

of a student's learning for some time. However, many mainstream schools now have

alternative programs that can be the last attempt for such marginalized students. These

programs have been formally prepared for the negatives this situation and student

brings and has planned strategies in place to help him/her.

In the scenario which Stevens (1999) refers to — when a youth is successfully drawn

back to school or an alternative learning program — it is imperative that the adults

and peers acknowledge the internal damage that has already been done. They have to

realize it can take a very long time to repair before any progress can happen in terms

of acquiring skills or knowledge needed to become a worker or a full-time student

again: "reaching them requires special planning, advocacy efforts and supplemental

resources" (http://www.pathfind.org). These supplemental resources may be within

the program or in the community.

Alternative programs successfully use the elements of home to ease the student

back into a learning situation that is ready to match their social status with their

learning needs. The key goes back to the youth's human requirements: As Stevens

(1999) states "because their preoccupation with daily survival…Many of them live in

situations characterized by violence and distrust, so programs need to establish an

environment of respect, acceptance, and stability" (http://www.pathfind.org).

What can be done within an alternative classroom environment to create respect,

acceptance and stability between students and adults? Stevens (1999) is specific about

what schools can do to address the needs of socially marginalized youth, when he

states: "These facilities can also provide a sense of stability and community that youth

might lack: outreach programs, which actually find them on the street, offer emergency

medical care and informal education; telephone hotlines; drop-in centres and shelters;

transition homes and group homes prepare youth for independent living or help

reunite them with their families" (http://www.pathfind.org).

Stevens (1999) provides excellent advice with the suggestion that "programs should

work with those members of the community who have already earned young people's

trust. By understanding where young people go when they need help, programs can

strengthen and build on support networks that already exist" (http://www.pathfind.

org). Could a mainstream high school do this? Could such partnerships be put in

place without compromising those trust relationships? Or can this only be handled by

non-school division programs which are free from the constraints of an authoritarian

relationship?

The element of trust also involves the concept of "home" and how this could

possibly have an influence on programming. This idea is supported by details found in

Sinclaire's book *Looking for Home*. She reminds teachers that:

> Home is a place which provides us with the sense of communion with
>
> others that helps the individual self emerge. Home helps us become
>
> conscious of the world around ourselves and establish an identity with
>
> others. Home calls to each of us as a search for the familiar, the intimate,
>
> the safe, the place where one can take risks, fail and be accepted back in."
>
> (1994, p. xix)

The author laments her disappointing home base and could be describing a

mainstream classroom: "My home was not 'home' in the sense of letting down one's

hair, a place where one could have rest and refuge. It was a place where we conformed

to strict guidelines that excluded baring our souls" (Sinclaire, 1994, p. 6). What kind

of home is found in the classrooms of Industrial Arts Collegiate? Can a classroom be

"home-like" with all of the purposes behind it, with the size and diversity of family it is

meant to accommodate? What sense of "home" do alternative programs offer, whether

they are part of a school division or not? No matter what time a student shows up, do they unconditionally accept that student into the room, unlike Cassie's teacher?

Parsons (2007) touches on the element of home when he compares teachers to parents:

> A mother, on the other hand, must give first priority to the needs of her child, regardless of his capacities to achieve…But at the same time, it is essential that the teacher is *not* a mother to her pupils, but must insist on universalistic norms and the differential reward of achievement. Above all she must be the agent of bringing about and legitimizing a differentiation of the school class on an achievement axis." (p. 44)

Home is not a place we have to earn; too bad school is. "It does not matter what you have or have not done, there is always a place for you at home. This implies the idea of acceptance, an understanding by another that this is also your place of being and that in it you simply are" (Sinclaire, 1994, p. 9). Where can marginalized youth find acceptance in the school division? Is there a possibility of creating a successful school experience (a home?) for marginalized youth within school division affiliated alternative programs? The following section examines some of the alternative programming currently offered by Mission Gardens School Division.

Alternative Programming for the Anti-School Subculture

School Division Affiliated Alternative Programs

According to the Mission Gardens School Division published information, there are three main on-campus alternative programs and one off-campus program offered by Industrial Arts Collegiate. The following is a description of the criteria for a student's admission to the alternative programs.

To be considered for an alternative program, the school team, including the parent/guardian, must agree that the student meets several of the following criteria:

• The student requires a specialized program which is only available on a division-wide basis;

• The student needs intensive, multiple resources;

• The student requires an unusually high amount of structure and individual supervision;

• A large group setting, even when geared for multilevel instruction, impedes achievement of the goals in the student's individual education plan;

• The school's efforts to program for the student in a mainstream setting have not been successful;

• The student demonstrates the need for frequent adult feedback and frequent reinforcement; and

• The student requires a learning environment with reduced stimulation.

The Strength-Ability-Focus-Education (SAFE) is a program for students with very severe to profound emotional/behavioural disorders. Students must have documented violence issues and usually have a youth criminal record. The major goal of the

program is to help the students develop the social, self-management, self-control and problem-solving skills that are necessary to reintegrate into the regular classroom and community. Some of the students may also have a modified academic curriculum.

SAFE is considered a Special Education program for students aged 6-16 who exhibit behaviours characteristic of very severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour disorder (EBD). Some of these students exhibit behaviour that requires intensive support and intervention. Students might also possess mild mental handicaps. The program is located in various schools in the Mission Gardens School Division and provides a low-enrollment setting, an intensive staff-student ratio and a resource-treatment component. The home school remains actively involved by participating in the placement, planning, and reintegration processes. The primary purpose of the SAFE program is to improve the student's social functioning.

Next is the Industrial Arts Collegiate CONNECT program which has been operating since 2007. Its focus is to help students graduate from Grade 12 with the close involvement of one teacher and one educational assistant who are with the students every day. The students do go to other classrooms, particularly for their vocational programs, but the majority of their time is spent in the CONNECT classroom with that one teacher. As the promotional material for the program states, the three pillars of CONNECT's philosophy are: success fosters confidence; confidence encourages the trying of new things; trying new things creates new opportunities.

The CONNECT program offers a unique learning environment. An individualized

learning plan will be developed upon admission. The program plan will consist of specific educational/vocational goals as well as individual behavioural goals. Courses include: English, mathematics, geography, history, sciences, physical education, leadership and career education. The CONNECT program follows a 5-period day.

Referrals are made by Industrial Arts Collegiate Student Services, CONNECT Program staff and Industrial Arts Collegiate principals. Referral information will include student's name, living situation, status, goals and expectations, and potential barriers to success. Students 18 years of age will be asked to sign a waiver form to allow CONNECT program staff to contact and inform parents/guardians in regards to issues arising from participating in the program.

The CONNECT program believes that students' successes are dependent on a strong support system. The teachers work hard to involve the students, other teachers and parents in sharing the successes and the responsibilities of problem solving. Efforts will be made and initiatives will be taken to encourage greater involvement with parents and/or guardians.

Ideally, students would be in the CONNECT program for a maximum of two years until they reach graduation. In the past three years, CONNECT has graduated every student who was eligible, adding at least 15 graduates to Industrial Arts Collegiate who had a low chance of achieving their Grade 12 standing.

The next program of interest is the High School Alternative Classroom (HSAC) which is an alternative program offered on-campus but has not proven to be

particularly successful. It may have shown results in the first few years, but it is not

resulting in students earning credits, which is the measure of success. The HSAC

program has been delivered in a low enrollment class in the same format for about the

last 15 years at Industrial Arts Collegiate. HSAC grew out of the need to accommodate

low-achieving students who were receptive to extra assistance in the regular classroom

but did not qualify in any way for special education funding or programming. These

students often had failed a subject (math, social studies/geography, English, or science)

at the grade 9 or 10 level once or twice. So simply repeating the subject in the same

classroom structure with 25 or so other students was not working.

It was also recognized by the administration that even though Industrial Arts

Collegiate was not semestered, these students often did not need to repeat the entire

year, but only certain sections to meet the requirements for the credit. With one teacher

delivering English and social studies, and the other covering math and science, some

students could receive both of those credits in possibly half the year and then move

onto the grade 11 level sooner than if they had to repeat the entire course.

The delivery of instruction is one-on-one in a classroom setting of no more than

ten students. Each student works from workbooks broken down from the curricular

outcomes. Each student completes the booklets at his/her own pace. The teacher

assists each student as required. The social dynamics of the room are different from

that of a regular classroom because the students are not instructed or managed as

one homogenous group. There is the same structure of a specific slot in the timetable,

a bell to signify the beginning and end of the period, and one teacher and possibly

an educational assistant who is the source of the information required to meet the

expectations and gain the credit. In general, HSAC can work for students who need a

change in their environment in order to focus on the subject area. However, students

need to be positively motivated to achieve the credit.

HSAC has been successful in providing a place for such students, and has worked

for those who are marginalized. However, because it is very similar to a mainstream

classroom structure with a mainstream teacher, it has not proven effective in addressing

the needs of Anti-School Kids. There is opportunity to turn this program into an

alternative setting by making attendance in HSAC structured in small portions with less

rigid start and end times. With it following a traditional timetable, it cannot serve as a

true alternative program.

Both CONNECT and HSAC were designed to deal with behavioural and social

difficulties of high school students. The teachers of these programs recognize that many

of the students have a long history of low achievement in school subjects and may have

actual learning delays or disabilities that require one-on-one or concentrated learning

strategies. These issues are easier to address in both of these programs where it is not

usually practical in a regular mainstream classroom slot.

The one off-campus school division affiliated alternative program of Industrial

Arts Collegiate is called Bridge. It is an alternative grade 9/10 placement for students

aged 15-18 who have been unsuccessful in conventional school programs. The term

"placement" means there is not open enrollment; rather, students are placed or selected by school division staff into the program. Situated on the sixth floor of a building in downtown Winnipeg, they have an enrollment of 40 students and are staffed with two teachers and two teacher-assistants.

Students in this program have typically not been successful in a conventional high school for one or more of the following reasons: habitual poor attendance, academic gaps, poor motivation, difficulty in relationships with peers and authority figures, or involvement with gangs or criminal activities. The students in this program exhibit the same range of learning ability as would be found in a regular program.

The aim and philosophy of Bridge is to provide students with the opportunity and support to improve their personal and learning skills, and earn academic credits at the Grade 9 and 10 level. The system is flexible within a highly structured context — students have freedom of choice within the parameters of the program.

Students are expected to work hard at their academics, but because they work on individual modules, students are able to choose which subjects they will emphasize, and when. Individual or small group academic instruction and support are provided. If students do not have the skills to do grade 9/10 work, they are given preliminary work to help build those skills. Most of the students are capable of regular grade 9/10 work, but if necessary, teachers will modify to allow them to earn Adapted credits. This means that the numerical mark on the report card will have an (A) or (M) beside it to designate it as Adapted or Modified.

The teachers hold individual goal-setting meetings about every twelve weeks. At these meetings students, staff and parents (or another supportive person in the student's life) meet and review what the student has accomplished in the last term, and set specific goals for the coming term. These long term goals provide each student with an action plan. Staff check with each student on a daily basis as to what they plan to accomplish that day towards their long term goal.

The teachers monitor and regularly report on attendance, work progress and behaviour. They call home each day a student is absent. At the end of every month, each student receives a detailed report stating attendance rates, work completed, and any notable personal achievements or difficulties that month.

The staff provide assistance, guidance and support in all areas of the students' lives. They regularly speak to parents and other support people to hear and share concerns about the student.

Teachers and teacher assistants try to help students develop a strong sense of group identity and pride in belonging to the Bridge Program. Fun and community building are important parts of the program. The classroom (and the kitchen) remain open during lunch, which results in staff and students spending informal time talking, eating or playing cards. The teachers and students often take Friday afternoons for a fun activity together such as swimming, tobogganing, or playing pool.

Non-School Division Affiliated Alternative Programs

What would happen to Anti-School Kids if they were prevented from

demonstrating delinquent behaviour for others to observe? What if they were taken off-campus, to a location removed from the premises all together? Would they remain part of their anti-school group once they have been transferred to a different group, with different boundaries and expectations and norms? What if they were placed into a non-school division program, eradicating the former conflict relationship and given opportunities to build new relationships and a fresh start for learning?

Non-school division affiliated alternative programs can possibly provide such opportunities, as well as the following:

• A clothing bank with donated clothing for trading or taking;

• Access to the classroom, and sometime the teacher, outside of school hours;

• Computer access including Internet, MSN and Facebook, e-mail, and the ability to use programs such as word processing as well as the printer;

• Access to leisure and entertainment such as watching TV, movies or listening to music with CDs or MP3s as well as books, magazines, newspapers, cards and hand-held games such as electronic Yahtzee;

• Access to food and snacks, microwave, kettle, toaster oven, refrigerator, stove top and of course a kitchen table to gather around;

• Access to facilities for showering and to personal hygiene products such as deodorant and facecloths.

What is described above does not exist — yet — on campus in the Mission Gardens School Division, although isolated elements can be found in the school division-affiliated alternative programs featured in this study. Where more of these elements

can be found is in the non-school division affiliated programs of interest which include:

The Urban Art Institute, Street Light Inc., and North Syde Boxing. Short descriptions of

these programs follow, with additional details found in Appendix A.

First, the Urban Art Institute is a not-for-profit community youth art centre located

in the core area of Winnipeg, using art as a tool for community, social, economic and

individual growth. It is the only one of its kind in North America for artists between the

ages of 8 and 28 (and some who are a little older). Their mission statement is as follows:

The Urban Art Institute provides high-risk youth in our communities with a

relevant career skills training program, that also serves as an entry point to further

education and employment. The gallery provides these youth with the opportunity

to build a positive self-image while at the same time offering them alternative

ways of expressing themselves in a more socially acceptable manner. It constantly

strives towards establishing a strong connection between these high-risk youth and

their community. Finally, it partners with other youth agencies and programs to

better coordinate and expand the range of services offered to high risk youth in our

communities.

The Urban Art Institute is dedicated to the following:

• the promotion of youth art as its own genre;

• providing a place where young artists can take creative risks;

• young artists who are working outside institutional expectations;

• neighborhood beautification and community development through public art;

• free art lessons to young people who cannot afford high tuition and supply costs;

• fostering a sense of creative cooperation and self healing.

The Urban Art Institute is an entity that is truly unique to Winnipeg, and likely all of North America. It's a space, a youth community art centre, where young artists can meet, work, research, exchange ideas, learn skills and show their work in an environment that both encourages and sees the value in their work. The Urban Art Institute's operations are multifaceted; and the staff view art as a powerful tool for community development, social change and individual growth.

With the Urban Art Institute, inner-city kids have a safe, consistent place to go where people are genuinely concerned about their well-being, whether it is making sure they have a nutritious snack or activities that stretch and engage their minds or mentoring them towards a future that they are encouraged to reach for, or a simple hug and an ear that listens. These are the things that mould our children into the leaders and teachers of the future.

Second, Street Light Inc. is a community and street level organization committed to helping youth and young adults find a way back from the streets. The mission statement that opens Street Light's Annual Report reads: "To provide youth with what they need, on their terms, to better their lives." What sets Street Light apart from many other youth services, and indeed from the public education system, is expressed in the words: *On their terms.*

Street Light also organizes a Youth Speakers Bureau. This prevention program

relies on a pool of consistent Youth Speakers who each have her or his own specific

topics and perspectives on which she or he can speak — Suicide & Depression, Crystal

Meth, the Drug Trade, Anger & Conflict, Youth Homelessness & Poverty, and Racial

Discrimination. These young people are "graduates" of Street Light programming who

want to give back and help other marginalized youth.

The In-House Initiatives Program of Street Light Inc. works under the guise

of a literacy program, Street Light Prevention developed the weekly Rock 'n Roll

Appreciation Workshops. Not only do youth participants have the opportunity to

develop their literacy skills, but also learn about history and the impact music and

musicians have had on popular culture. Other regular workshops include "Movie Script

Reading", "Movie Club", "Drama with Columpa" and "Storytelling". In addition,

workshops dealing with other life skills are developed either by Street Light staff or

special guests who are brought in to facilitate the provision of relevant information as

needed.

Lastly is Street Light's food program. The goal of this program is to teach youth

skills that will help them to cook meals that are nutritious while sticking to a tight

budget and developing employment skills to broaden their opportunities.

In 2005, it was estimated that there were over 3,000 homeless youth on the streets

of Winnipeg. From *Outwords* March 2008*:* "Sometimes all a young person needs is

someone to help them learn how to cook, how to look after an apartment, how to

budget and pay bills. Finding a job without an address, phone number, or clean clothes

can be a fruitless search." Street Light is there to help. As the Executive Director told a

group of teachers at a conference in 2009: "If you smell, people treat you differently."

Street Light is there to help change that.

Finally, North Syde Boxing Club is incorporated as a non-profit organization and

provides both structured competitive development and recreational programming to

inner-city youth free of charge. North Syde Boxing uses the appeal of amateur boxing

to engage financially and socially disadvantaged youth in a structured program that

promotes a healthy lifestyle. The youth in the program are at high risk of becoming

involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour if not afforded the opportunity of a

high quality alternative. The Club seeks to provide a safe, structured and supportive

environment where participants are exposed not only to sport, but also positive role

models of dedicated volunteers, athletes and coaches.

North Syde Boxing Club's goal is to remove the social and economic barriers so that

disadvantaged youth of Winnipeg will have the same opportunities as other youth to

develop and grow through sport. Winnipeg has the highest percentage of Aboriginal

gangs in Canada and marginalized youth are ideal recruits for the Manitoba Warriors

and Indian Posse street gangs as well as other criminal activity that occurs in the core

area of Winnipeg. Participation in a positive alternative like North Syde Boxing gives

these kids a positive choice that will help them develop both athletic and life skills that

will benefit them both now, but more importantly in the future.

It is North Syde Boxing Club's mission to provide the inner-city youth of Winnipeg

with an activity and safe environment that promotes and enhances the physical and emotional well-being and social development of young athletes, develops individual athletic skills, life skills, work ethic, discipline, sportsmanship, self-respect, and pride as these young inner-city kids struggle to find their way in society.

North Syde Boxing hopes to give our youth experience as individuals and teach them the necessary skills they need to grow in their lives outside of boxing. Their motto, "It's Bigger than Boxing", is very important to all involved and we will continue to remove any barriers our youth must face as they struggle to overcome all of the obstacles they face in life. Kids come to the Club through a variety of avenues, including referrals from schools, particularly economically and socially marginalized youth who have recently dropped out of school.

North Syde Boxing provides the following programs to its athletes and their families: Competitive boxing, Recreational boxing, Nutritional Program, Mentorship Program, Stay-in-School Program and the Elder/History Program. Additional details can be found in Appendix A. North Syde Boxing Club hopes to make a difference in these youth's lives by exposing them to various different programs. The goal is to provide the necessary education and information so that these inner-city youth have the knowledge to make right choices in life, and make a positive contribution to society.

Details of the design of the study involving these non-school division affiliated alternative programs is found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The main idea for the study became firm in the spring 2008. By September 2008,

a written framework was in place. The initial investigation into the topic and the

literature review was written throughout this period until the fall of 2009. Throughout

2009, the researcher identified potential participants through work contacts and

professional development opportunities. Chapter 1, 2 and 3 were submitted to the

committee in November 2009. The process of obtaining the approval of the Fort Garry

Campus Research Ethics Board took place between November and December 2009,

with approval granted on December 23. The proposal defense was approved by the

researcher's committee in October 2009. The interviews took place between February

and June 2010. The data was coded according to the four dimensions, sorted and

categorized between then and September 2010. The researcher and advisor worked

through edits of Chapter Four and Five, then all chapters throughout October 2010 until

March 2011.

Using in-depth interviews, this study focused on the interactions between Anti-

School Kids and the adults running the alternative programs and the bonds between

them. Each interview used the same research questions. The six interviews lasted from

1 1/2 to 2 hours. The audio was captured on a MacBook, utilizing GarageBand and then

transcribed into Appleworks. A total of 100 pages of data were compiled. After multiple

readings, then through the transcription process, the researcher became quite familiar with the data. Appleworks documents were created for each dimension and the sorting began, with multiple rounds following. Once each dimension was completed, Chapter Four began to take shape.

The Participants

The researcher was already acquainted with each of the subjects and has a collegial relationship with them, but no power relationship existed. The participants in the study were invited by the researcher both in person and in writing. The purpose of this research project had already been discussed between the parties, at times when the researcher was engaged in school business with the participants. This project came into being partly due to conversations between the researcher and participants about how the marginalized youth population could be served better, and during discussions about shared students. Each participant read a short synopsis of the project and verbally agreed to be interviewed. Once the researcher received approval from ENREB, she distributed the Letters of Consent and received all of their approval in writing. For the three participants who worked for Mission Gardens School Division, consent was given by the principal of each school. The Consent Form and Letter to Participants are attached as Appendix C and Appendix D.

The researcher interviewed six participants, using the research instrument questions described in the following section. Participants were informed of their right to refuse to

answer any questions and were free to withdraw from the interview at any time. They

were also informed that feedback regarding the results of the study will be available to

participants in writing if requested. Interviews were at a mutually convenient time and

location, in an environment conducive to a one-on-one private verbal interview.

The participants from non-school division affiliated alternative programs were:

- The Head Coach/Program Director of North Syde Boxing Club,

- The Executive Director, Street Light Inc., and

- The Program Director of Urban Art Institute.

The participants from school division affiliated alternative programs were:

- A Bridge Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate.

- A CONNECT Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate

- A SAFE Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate.

Relevant background of the participants in this study can be found in the beginning

of Chapter Four. All personal names and program names are pseudonyms.

Research Instrument Questions

The research instrument consists of a semi-structured interview framed around the

following four dimensions:

A. Contextual Dimension: personal and then program-specific factors;

B. Structural Dimension: organizational and institutional factors;

C. Professional Dimension: roles and societal factors, specifically institutional

expectations; and

D. Interpersonal Dimension: individual factors and factors related to our human capacity.

It is worth noting that the questions were asked in this order, but the data are presented in the order demanded by the analysis.

A. Contextual

1. What is your story? How did you end up here, in this role, doing what you do? Can you provide me with some of your personal and professional background?

2. Can you introduce us to one of your students and how s\he came here, how the program affected his/her life and what is the significance of the story? I am looking for a success story about a youth from the anti-school subculture/marginalized population who experienced your program and then as a direct result got his/her life moving in a more positive, productive direction with tangible results.

3. What are some specific life skills that students learn here? How have marginalized youth responded to what your organization has had to offer them? What do you do with that feedback?

4. What do you as a teacher/mentor/guardian have to bargain with in your program, or do you need to bargain at all with your kids? Are there situations where you have to force compliance? What are some of the forms that their defiance takes? Are there situations where someone is asked to leave the program or premises? Under what

conditions can s/he return?

5. How important is being on time here? Or, how important is the amount of time spent here, learning? How do you handle the mechanics of attendance in your program?

6. If someone you are trying to help through your program won't or can't stay, what happens to him/her? Where would someone go from here? What would happen to them?

B. Structural

7. In your own words, what is the mission or *raison d'etre* of your organization? What do you think is the most important thing you do here?

8. Can you name some specific structural differences between your organization and a regular high school that might make it easier for marginalized students to be here?

9. In your opinion, what experiences did your kids have in mainstream school that contributed to their inability to continue and possibly find success there? On the other hand, are there specific experiences you know of that helped them find their way to an alternative program such as yours? If you could change one thing about the way schools operate, what would it be?

C. Professional

10. Can you explain how you see your role and its effect on programming? What are some markers of progress with your students?

11. What is your opinion of some of the school-based alternative programs that are

designed to help marginalized youth? Can you identify some strengths? Challenges?

12. Can you describe how you react to youth who demonstrate anti-social behaviour, language, lifestyle choices, dress and hygiene, those sorts of markers of marginalization that may require "fixing" or changing? Do you make any demands on your kids in terms of their outward identity; do they have to change who they are to succeed here?

D. Interpersonal

13. Can you describe your relationship to these students in terms of being a teacher, a mentor, a guardian? What is the difference between you and the students' parents?

14. Which personal experiences or which parts of your past and present personal life do you draw from to develop your interpersonal relationships with your students?

15. How do non-teachers like yourself interact differently with students than teachers? Are there some aspects to your relationship that you could pinpoint as being "touchstones" of success with marginalized youth?

Analysis of Data

It is worth repeating that the purpose of this research project was to examine the relational aspects of alternative education programs which serve students in the anti-school subculture who have not been successful in regular high schools. The research questions were designed to help identify what works in these particular environments to help marginalized youth learn, some of which may be transferable to help engage

them within mainstream institutions. Keeping the purpose of the study in mind, the main question asked of the participants was, "What do you do in your program that works for the Anti-School Kids?" The answers, in the form of the resulting data, follow in Chapter 4.

As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) predict, "As you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behaviour, subjects' ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out" (p. 173). I developed coding categories based on the method described by Bogdan and Biklen. I believe it is because of the careful design of the research questions that the bulk of the data fit into those four dimensions. New information provided by the participants became "The Fifth Dimension" in Chapter Four and also helped inform the conclusions found in Chapter Five.

All of the data were analyzed using the phenomenological research approach, which according to Bogdan and Biklen (2008) " focuses on the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals, i.e., what all participants have in common as they experience a certain phenomenon. Using in-depth interviews, it develops descriptions (not explanations or analyses) of the essences and underlying structures of these experiences" (p. 25).

Bogdan and Biklen also say, "Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations," (2008, p. 25). The researcher, in turn, presents these interactions to the reader to then make meaning of an answer to the question. To prepare the reader to

accept the data, the researcher also reminds that "What phenomenologists emphasize then, is the subjective aspects of people's behaviour," (Bogdan and Biklen, 2008, p. 26). Since the purpose was to "examine the relational aspects", it is the relationship between teacher and student that forms the focus of the data.

Implications of this Study

This study has implications for the way teachers and administrators plan and implement alternative programming in high schools. By exposing the personal challenges faced by marginalized youth and the anti-school subcultures to which they belong, the researcher hopes to promote a better understanding of their needs as learners and to reveal strategies to engage these youth despite their different behaviours, values, norms, beliefs and rituals. Also, by revealing how non-school division affiliated alternative programs function in order to successfully move these young people along their life path, the researcher may identify strategies which can be applied by mainstream institutions. Even if one teacher finds one effective strategy or new approach within these pages to help one lost youth find her way, this would be a valuable endeavour.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & DATA ANALYSIS

The data reported in this chapter were collected from the six personal interviews conducted by the researcher over a five month period in 2010. These interviews involved representatives of three school division affiliated alternative programs and three non-school division affiliated alternative programs. The research questions were designed to allow the participants to explore what problems and solutions exist when trying to engage the anti-school subculture in learning. The data were categorized into the four dimensions discussed under Methodology.

> A. Contextual Dimension: personal and then program-specific factors;
>
> B. Interpersonal Dimension: individual factors and factors related to our human capacity;
>
> C. Structural Dimension: organizational and institutional factors;
>
> D. Professional Dimension: roles and societal factors, specifically institutional expectations.

The analyses of the data resulted in the creation of a fifth category, which turned out to be a collection of the strategies that work, in the words of the participants and according to their experience. The researcher created sub-categories within the four dimensions and identified the commonalities found between the participants' answers with appropriate subheads. However, the summarization of the observations within

each category and overarching commonalities is left for Chapter 5.

The researcher also analyzed the data based on the literature review, particularly the research of Eith (2005) and Wyn & White (1997). The first area of analysis focused on Eith's research to determine if any of the data collected show a link between the strength of the student-school bond and how this may affect an Anti-School Kid's level of engagement in mainstream schooling. Also, can Hirschi's theory be applied to marginalized youth: do the lack of school bonds result in anti-school behaviours [delinquency] or is the flow of responsibility much more complex?

The second analysis focused on Wyn & White's premise that although "family context plays a huge role in shaping our identies...identity is first and foremost about social connections, shaped by experiences within social institutions" (1997, p. 81-82). The researcher used this lens to analyze the data within the coding categories — how schooling has played an active role in marginalizing this subculture causing these students to turn to alternative programming in order to be engaged.

The researcher should also acknowledge the influence of what Ballantine & Spade (2001, p. 266) call "moments of inclusion" and "moments of exclusion". This idea can be a practical analysis because it recognizes actual moments: "These moments may include placement in an academically gifted program, encouragement and preparation for applying for college; [conversely], moments of exclusion may include placement in a low reading group" (p. 266). The researcher focused on such tipping points within the participants' interviews. This also supports the conclusion that if one adult's negative

influence can cause anti-school behaviour, so may one adult's positive influence create

pro-school behaviour and subsequent successful engagement.

Contextual Dimension

The Contextual Dimension is the category of research questions and resulting data

that groups the detailed information on the study participants, their programs and the

youth they serve. This information is intended to provide context to the overall study

and provide answer to the question: Who are these people?

Who are the Youth who Attend these Alternative Programs?

How exactly can Anti-School Kids be identified? Is it their clothing? Hairstyles?

Language? Norms and rituals? And what specifically identifies members of this group

to educators? The characteristics of these students that the researcher chose to focus on

for this study are listed in detail in Chapter One under the subhead *Characteristics of*

Marginalized Youth. The following details provided by the participants give an excellent

picture of who these Anti-School Kids are.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: It's any child you can think of,

in many ways. We have intravenous drug users, a lot of FASD; some

of the kids are at a Kindergarten level; we have dual addictions and

co-occurring disorders; we have plenty of undiagnosed mental health

issues. We see a lot of poverty. Our kids are on the street, don't have

resources, don't have supports, some come straight from their families,

some straight from the system, some straight from the Reserve, lost on

the streets, some are abandoned.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: There's a huge rainbow of who

we serve. There's FAS issues, learning disabilities or disorders, economic

variances and racial concerns as well. Kids in foster care, kids who are

denied basic human rights, rights being violated — no food, shelter, or

support.

Teacher, SAFE Program: Kids who have severe emotional problems,

ranging from OCD, ADD, ADHD, FADS; kids who are either in the foster

system, or dealing with the youth center, McDonald Youth Services, CFS,

single parents — the population has been 90% Aboriginal students.

This led the researcher to ask the participants where these Anti-School Kids come

from and how they ended up in their respective programs. In addition to the common

theme that many of the students have had some experience of trauma, the participants

remarked that often the Anti-School Kids were active in "the system", referring to

Child & Family Services, living in foster care or at least not living with either biological

parent or any relative. This is a characteristic referred to by the researcher in Chapter One under the subhead *Marginality.* This is consistent with Wyn & White's assertion that "social identity is constructed in the context of a series of lived experiences…[and] whether one grows up in a nuclear or extended form of family affects how we view kin relations and adult interaction associated with specific cultural norms…serving to mould one's identity and group ties in particular ways" (1997, p. 81).

Eith (2005) clearly states: "Though research is inconclusive on the link between family structure and school bonding, enough research supports the correlation to suggest an effect. Thus, it is predicted that children who reside with a single parent or parent and stepparent are less socially bonded to school" (p. 19). The researcher sees agreement between this statement and the data provided by the six participants.

The Executive Director of Street Light Inc. shared this: "So one of the new kids, I asked him where he's from and he replied, 'I'm from here. I'm from the system. I've been in the system all of my life. I'm from here.' If we're not sensitive to that, how the hell are you going to teach math?" She elaborates on where her program participants come from:

> Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: I have kids from suburbia, from
> two-parent, financially-resourced people, St. James, River Heights, kids
> that are inner-city — and the common theme with all of them is *trauma*.
> Whether the trauma be abuse — physical, verbal, sexual, spiritual, or
> abandonment. We wonder why they act like [they do]; they have been so

systemically abused, they are broken down and there's no trust, and we

are talking a number of mental health issues.

The theme of trust surfaces throughout the interviews. When youth are placed in group situations after suffering trauma, an educator can expect difficulties. As repeated often in *Connecting with Kids in Conflict,* Morse (2008) reinforces the need for trust, particularly for groups of delinquent or at-risk youth: "Initially, peer groups may look like a battleground where both adult and youth see one another as enemies. The core of changing this dynamic is trust" (p.45).

The study participants revealed how crucial it was to know what has happened to that kid, to understand some of his/her story and think about how relationship-building and trust development can help them along their path.

> Program Director, Urban Art Institute: One child who comes to mind is Pablo — physically he can be violent, certainly he's in crisis all the time, but we've seen great changes with him. His communication has really gone through the roof; when he's in the right studio he'll share in a positive way and he'll open up to the staff that he's comfortable with. It's just amazing to see how they've worked together on art projects and have built up sort of an understanding, which has been a real goal of this instructor.

Teacher, Bridge Program: Ok, his name's Scott and Scott came to us from a transitional program for kids who were heavily involved in crime. This young man had been involved in gangs; his whole family is involved in gangs, dad is a big gang member, mom drinks most of the time and he basically is the adult in the family and he worries greatly about his family and worries about his sister and there is a lot of violence in their home and a lot of violence in their relationships and in his life. He presented himself in a very gangster kind of a way with his look with his bling, his tattoos and the way he walked and talked, but he wanted to be successful in school, wanted to graduate from high school which was incredibly admirable and wanted to have the support. He was very responsible, very respectful; he required a lot of one-on-one attention just to help model for him how he could act in a classroom setting , for him to be successful; he was very low in his confidence level.

Teacher, SAFE Program: I'll give you a snapshot of a student. He comes from a family that the parents divorced when he was 10. Mother is an alcoholic, father abuses some substances, this kid has been smoking cigarettes since he was 8 years old. He regularly smokes marijuana, he has tried other prescription drugs, he has drank, he's a kid that doesn't

shower very much; he's got mannerisms like he picks at his scabs, he

picks his nose. He would be part of the grungy sort of outcast type of

kid.

It could be observed from the data that the establishment of this trust between the

young person and the adult in this program is the student-school bond Eith (2005) says

is needed to successfully engage this marginalized youth in learning. It is also worth

noting that the bond is established despite the anti-school behaviours being displayed,

allowing the youth to maintain his/her identity, as noted by Wyn and White (1997) to

create a rapport of respect.

Who are These Adults who Work in the Alternative Programs?

With a picture in mind of the students, the researcher used the interview questions

to gain some understanding of the adults who work in these programs. Next, the

researcher provides data that conveys information about what exactly happens in these

programs that sets them apart from mainstream high schools. Between the personal

and professional characteristics of the adults and the program content, the reader can

gain some idea of the inner workings of these programs. The researcher derives this

understanding as supported by the data: the people *are* the program!

The researcher will first let the participants speak to the question: who are you?

Then, the researcher will lay out the core pieces of the programs, those kernels of truth

about what it is that attracts the anti-school subculture to these places and what it is that holds them there while they learn. The participants reveal what gets these young people to a point where they are ready to move forward on their life path with positivity and hope. They reveal what is done to improve the student-school bond, despite what has happened to weaken that bond previously. The data says that bond is improved with the establishment of a one-to-one relationship between the teacher in that program and that Anti-School Kid, even if it is first established with a family member or a bail support worker. Understanding how to establish that bond is critical.

The core of the programs are just this: it is the *people* who interact with the youth and it is also the *youth* who participate — the inner fortitude, the strength, the courage, perseverance, love and intelligence of the people who make things happen in these programs — this is what make them work — actions, not philosophies! Then, it is the relationships that these people form with the Anti-School Kids which is the heart that equates to success for both the youth it serves and the program itself. As Eith (2005) discusses in her research, this involves attachment, commitment, involvement and belief, all facets needed to have a pro-school to student bond. In addition, the people who run these programs develop a reputation in institutional circles as well as carrying 'street cred' — members of the anti-school subculture trust the people in the program and they spread the word. Here is that element of trust that the participants describe as sacred.

The following data speaks to the question of who these people are — the men and

women who form the very hearts of these organizations. Where did they come from

and how did they end up in their respective programs?

Who is the HEAD COACH of NORTH SYDE BOXING?

> I basically lived the same lifestyle, maybe not as severe as some of them,
>
> but it had a lot of similarities, so I know what they're feeling, what
>
> they're going through, so I can help them. So when you have a better
>
> understanding of what they're going through, it allows me to be more
>
> successful in dealing with them because it allows me to have the patience
>
> when I need to have and it allows me to have the understanding when
>
> I need to have it, and the tolerance. And I know that change is a very
>
> hard thing and acceptance has got to come first; they have to accept
>
> their circumstances and once they are able to accept their circumstances,
>
> then they can look at changing. Well, I know what it's like. I got raised
>
> on welfare and I know what it's like to have only one pair of jeans and
>
> to not have any runners. And I know what it's like to be ridiculed by
>
> other kids, being a visible minority. Just having a lot of the same kind
>
> of characteristics that these kids have lets me know exactly what they
>
> are going through, just to survive. This allows me to do something
>
> positive and it also allows me to be an influence in a lot of these kids'
>
> lives. You know most of these kids are fatherless, parent-less, are raised

by extended families, grandmothers, neighbours, and the people that
are looking after them, they usually have their hands full because very
seldom is there one kid in the family.

Who is the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of STREET LIGHT INC.?

 I was born and raised on Agnes at Ellice, went to Gordon Bell. We were
all great athletes. We had access to the gym 24 hours a day; we had
coaches who got kids shoes if they needed them. The ones that weren't
doing very well academically, the phys. ed. department really rose to that
and pulled them in. The art department did the same thing. We didn't
want to leave. School was better than home for many, many kids, so that
was our refuge.

Who is the PROGRAM DIRECTOR of the URBAN ART INSTITUTE?

 I graduated from SJR [St. John's Ravenscourt] in Winnipeg then I went
to the University of Victoria and did an Art History degree, an Honours
degree, but I did my thesis on Costume and Puppetry. So I came back to
Winnipeg and immediately was approached by the Urban Art Institute
and I started teaching Fashion. Eventually, that built up and I became
a Program Coordinator and was teaching seven times a week, then
eventually the Director moved on and I took her place. It was nice, it

was organic, I got to experience the actual program before I took it on so

that's a really big deal. Teaching here was amazing. I like having had that

history because then people can't tell me that I don't know what it's like.

And I still teach weekly here; I put myself back into that role as much as

I can.

Who is the TEACHER of the BRIDGE PROGRAM?

What brought me here was a need for a change and a desire to go

back into teaching [from Administration] but from an exposure for an

incredible need for kids to have alternate educational opportunities and

I thought what a great opportunity and a good growing opportunity for

me so I came here. I had actually worked at the Institute for the Blind for

many years; it was in a very much a rehabilitative helping role.

Who is the TEACHER of the CONNECT PROGRAM?

Most of my teaching experience is in the corrections system. I have a

Special Ed degree and right as soon as I graduated I was lucky enough

to get a teaching job in the justice system which I did for 15 years. Then I

ran a re-entry program at RB Russell for one year which was for people

coming out of the corrections system back into school. Then my family

and I moved to the Yukon and I taught there in the jail for 10 years, then

we lived in Calgary for 2 1/2 years and I ran my own school for street

kids and then we came back to Winnipeg and here I am.

Who is the TEACHER of the SAFE PROGRAM?

I had a good school experience. Then I went to university and ended up

dropping out after the first couple of years; then I went back and got a

job as a teaching assistant at my old high school with at-risk youth. So

this is in a south-end school, but working with the at-risk youth; did that

for probably 7 years and while I did that that's when I went to school

on the weekends and got my education degree through that. So I was

working as a TA, working in a school, plus also doing my university.

Understanding Youth Identity is Key

The first identifiable commonality between the participants is the agreement that

understanding youth identity is a key to success when dealing with Anti-School Kids.

But the data also says that it is important to look past the surface markers of identity

and to really see who you are dealing with. Wyn and White (1997) suggest that young

offenders often share a common background which is similar to characteristics of Anti-

School Kids. In their words, they tend to be:

Single, urban-living, male, high residential mobility, unemployed,

minority group status, weak attachment to school or poor school

performance...best seen as the effects of class division, which then

influence both their immediate behaviour and activities. (p. 35)

This thesis has focused on the characteristics of marginalized youth, particularly

the Anti-School Kids, along with demonstrable anti-social behaviour, anti-social

language, and lifestyle choices. As discussed, they have certain costumes that they

wear, which is just one marker of their identity. The researcher discussed how the adults

in the alternative programs handled the markers of their identities, which are often

overtly "anti-school". In other words, their identity markers directly contravene stated

dress codes and unstated mainstream expectations. However, learning occurs in these

alternative programs. Why is this? Was it their boots and hairstyles that prevented

the Anti-School Kids from learning, or was it the teachers who prevented the learning

from occurring, because they believed that the identity markers were obstacles to that

learning? What do the alternative program teachers have to say on this topic?

Teacher, Bridge Program: We just ask that they dress respectfully and

that they are not showing a lot of skin and that they have no offensive

language on their shirt which would offend anybody in class. So that's

the only expectation but the kids, I really do believe, celebrate their

diversity in looks. If something becomes an issue then we ask the parents

for their support and explain the reason why because we need to create

a work environment and we want it to be respectful and not distracting

plus we want them to prepare for work.

Teacher, Connect Program: But if kids have piercings or they colour

their hair, actually we kind of celebrate it because I think it's great,

what a harmless way to express yourself. And I think the beauty of this

class is that kids can do that and they know it's okay. So I think they

are celebrated for their diverse looks and encouraged and kids make

comments about how different they look and they are so okay with

it and they will all talk about their tattoos and piercings but they also

know what they have to cover up — like "You'd better cover that up, the

teacher won't like that!".

Teacher, SAFE Program: We do have stuff like the Emo, the Grunge,

the Goth, the Headbangers, the Rappers — we have all those sort of

kids. I try to tell them what to do; not to change them as people but to

make them more consciously aware of their own choices regarding their

wellness. I don't think I'm the "man" trying to stick it to them, and I'm

not "big brother" watching them. Because I know everybody is different

in this world and that's what makes things go around, because we don't

all look the same.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: So basically we try to get them to identify those positive things that they are and "I am an artist" is one of our slogans because they can't say they are a lawyer or a teacher but they can at this point say that they are an artist. And it's something that if they are dealing with an anti-youth attitude, then they can say "Yes, I'm a youth but I'm also an artist, a dancer, visual artist, rapper, dj…that's humanness, to all be engaged in something that inspires them.

How do these alternative teachers deal with the Anti-School identity on a day-to-day basis while getting what needs to be done in their learning environments?

Teacher, SAFE Program: I think pushing them outside their boundaries is not a bad thing and I say with a lot of stuff that I'm dealing with people may want to take another look at how they look. They might want to wear the spiky wrist band, spike their hair, but what I have issues with is general hygiene. I'll be honest, I think that you can dress or act how ever you want but I don't want to see someone completely grungy and dirty when you have the ability to clean yourself. I like to model pro-social behaviours, as in what's acceptable, and we do talk about scenarios at work, we share a lot of our own experiences.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: We had this group through recently, all 18-22, punk-rocked to the maximum, all with facial piercings, inappropriate t-shirts, tattoos — what's the best thing you can do with these kids? Train them to be really, really professional as an artist so they can go to Store X and present a proposal for a project that's all Photoshopped and beautifully done, with their business card and the person's like, "who is this kid?" They agree that kid's amazing, even though they scared them at first, but once they see them and how they are presenting themselves beyond their image, they might hire them! We also say "maybe don't wear the miniskirt to the job interview," we give them helpful hints; but encouraging them to express themselves but also be able to back up that expression which is something we go through from our youngest kids to our oldest ones.

Teacher, SAFE Program: Yes, kids say, "Well, you know my identity is this, my identity is messy hair and this shirt that I wear with a pot leaf on it, and what I say to them is "so you're telling me that the only thing that defines you as a person is how you dress and look? Well, I hate to say this but then you are lacking substance. Because you should be able to be a person with your own thoughts, and your own views."

Teacher, Connect Program: And I don't believe in this fixing things.

And to be perfectly honest, we have one kid who absolutely loves his

hat, okay so I realize it's the school policy and I'm not trying to be

disrespectful to the policy but he sits over there in the corner and he

wears his hat. And it's not a big deal. He knows, if that door opens, the

hat comes off, he knows that. But for him, that's a huge thing and it's

not a big deal. And I think that treating the kids as individuals and also

celebrating the different things the kids are interested in as opposed to

trying to make everyone the same, everybody do it the same, everybody

write it the same — I don't think that that works. And the one-size-fits-all

is a way easier way to do your job, but it's not very effective. And also

paying more attention to what that kid's life is about.

How did these students arrive in alternative programs? The data collected on this

question reveals a wide range of reasons. They range from the simplistic, such as the

program is located in the youth's neighbourhood, to a complicated mesh of social

problems, both external and internal. The researcher asked each participant to share

some of the reasons why youth ended up in their programs and why the kids had to

leave their mainstream school. The answers are more personal and less institutional

than the researcher had originally thought at the beginning of the research cycle. This

means the solutions can possibly be implemented by people — just as the problems were caused by people.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: No one cares, we get that a lot. There's bravado around that, usually they say, 'yeah so I wrote them off' and they turn it around because they [the kid] had already been written off. Some blame themselves and when you hear that, that's really terrible after you know their history of trauma and everything else and yet they are holding themselves responsible. Amazing abilities and strength; the way that they protect each other, the way they sort of handle each other like a family — dysfunctional, not a lot of skills — but still a family.

Teacher, Bridge Program: For a lot of the kids that we've had who have had anxiety issues it's been the big buildings with a lot of people which proves totally overwhelming. There are some kids here who are dealing with some serious mental health issues who just haven't been able to get past it.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: My club is located in Point Douglas which is the poorest area of Winnipeg — there's poverty, then there's crime, there's drugs, there's gangs, a lot of negative influences in regards

to things these kids have to face on a daily basis. They're all either on

social assistance or on fixed incomes that are very low. There's a lot of

challenges that these kids have to face. So I don't get those kids [from the

suburbs] nor am I really interested in those kids; I'm interested in kids

who want help and there's lots of them.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: So the kids that come to that

program are North End residents, for the majority. We have studios

at different community centres and we build our studios on a really

localized community. This includes Lord Selkirk Park residents, which is

one of the poorest communities in North America.

Interpersonal Dimension

The interpersonal dimension explains the interaction between program directors

and teachers and the participants. The researcher asked the participants what they

thought set them apart from other caregivers (like teachers or social workers) who

may not have been able to convince these kids to accept help to move forward with

their lives and learn. All of the participants proved to be much more humble than they

probably should have been, but the researcher was able to single out some strategies,

philosophies and personal characteristics that result in creative problem-solving with

Anti-School Kids. The researcher terms this interchange as "Inter-Action" to emphasize

the two parts: the "inter" which means the relationship or involvement of both the youth and adult and the "action" which literally means observable or measurable action — doing, not just talking about doing.

> Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: They accept it [help] from me because we have a bond. That bond is tighter with me than it is with their parents. And they know that as long as they are trying to help themselves, that I'll help them. Also, like I said a lot of the kids are fatherless, so I become a father-figure to them. The kids just trust me, they know that I'm there for their best interest and they know I'll go to bat for them — they've seen it. They know that I'm very caring and sharing, and all that does is develop trust with them. The more that they trust me, the more they'll listen to me; so once I have that trust I can instill all of these little things to make them better people without them even realizing it.

> Program Director, Urban Art Institute: I love watching the way our instructors interact with them because it is a respect system and you know you get frustrated with the little ones, you get frustrated with the older ones but at the end of the day, it's pure respect both ways. And that's because we show interest in the things they are interested in.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: So we unravel those issues one-by-one, kid-by-kid, case-by-case. And sometimes there is dormancy, where a kid doesn't want action of any kind, sometimes they'll step back a few paces because they just got out of treatment and that's enough for now. But that's the thing, we forgive, we forget, we don't judge, we set you up where you are at; if it's not working this time, then maybe next time, let us know what we can do. We keep them engaged, we don't judge. The principals are not judging, accepting kids where they are at,… and it's about relationships. I've been doing this for 30 years, and I've worked in every system and I've seen every gap in service and I know how it works.

Teacher, SAFE Program: What I'm finding, is to develop a trust, a rapport and a relationship with these kids, it takes over a year, despite the fact that I do see them in a smaller setting for 5 hours a day, it takes that long to get close to them. And I find that I'm constantly trying to believe them, what they tell me and I'm trying to believe in them. And to make them realize that they do count, like that they are important.

Teacher, Connect Program: They have a saying about me in here, you know you are really really fair but when your foot is down, it's down.

think we clearly give them a sense of belonging, and again for a lot of

them they definitely look to us as their parents or their mentors, the

person that's there for them. I think that's what they do.

The researcher asked participants if it was their impression that the Anti-School

Kids are actually happy to have an adult telling them how to behave in more socially

acceptable ways, much like a parent might. Here are a few of their comments:

Teacher, Connect Program: Absolutely. I don't think you could stand to

be in here if you didn't, even deep down, want that. Because sometimes

I am way too much of a mother, and I can't help it. They will say to

me, "You're just like my mom, my mom says that too." I think also the

relationship that we have with their caregivers, the kids don't have a

problem with that, they like that. And I think for a lot of those people,

this is something that's really new to them as well.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: And you have to be able to accept

their behaviour and how do you accept their behaviour? By having

information and understanding their background, understanding their

circumstances and the challenges they go through and realizing a lot

of times they behave that way because that's the only way they know. I

think that having a better understanding of how these kids live is crucial.

Teacher, Connect Program: I think it's just the climate that we have in here. It's the way that we have discussions because we are able to have a very close one-on-one relationship with our kids like we get very close to each other and they know a lot about us and we know a lot about them. think it has a lot to do with the fact that we don't have to win all the time. We're very strict, but a lot of people don't understand you don't have to play power and control games and still be strict. I am very direct and I'm really demanding sometimes but we always try to give our kids a huge sense of dignity all the time, no matter what we are dealing with. And it's not easy sometimes because it would be a lot easier to be in their face and really confrontational.

Participants also described the variations in how they handle particular "anti-school" behaviour, sometimes comparing their approach to that of other non-alternative teachers. The data reveals that what the researcher terms "an approach" would entail both actions and personal characteristics of the adults.

Teacher, Connect Program: And I don't see my kids as not being able to be successful anywhere else, it's just how they are dealt with. I mean

my kids tend to be a little bit more questioning of things, a little bit more challenging of things but I'm really like that myself too so I don't see that as a bad thing. I see it as a strength, not as a weakness and like I said earlier, I don't have to win, it shouldn't be about that. I don't do this because I want to be the all mighty powerful one, I want them to be empowered not me. I think people get confused about being creative and being permissive because I think a lot of them think that if you're a creative person where you are trying to teach to the kids' needs that you don't have any expectations and you're just going to let them hand in anything they want, and it is so far from that.

Teacher, SAFE Program: And also to not let little things get me going, like as I say, listening to music while you work is great, or taking a little 5 minute break to just doodle and draw is not a problem, but in a regular class, if there's frontal instruction and you're doing that, you are missing instruction. Yeah, if I look back to my university, I remember a professor once telling me once that he was a "warm demander". And I might be getting it a little bit wrong but he meant he was a warm person but there were still demands that had to be met.

Participants also shared their opinions about the mechanics of teaching which interfered negatively with kids' learning; in other words, interactions that turn Anti-School Kids away from the teacher and from the learning instead of drawing them closer. The participants provided specific examples of such interactions.

> Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: In the North End of Winnipeg, a lot of the people that teach there, shouldn't be teaching there. And the reason I'm saying that is because they come from the suburbs, they have a theoretical background, in regards to what these kids are going through but unless they've walked in their shoes, they truly will never know. They have social work degrees and this and that and then they are totally useless when it comes to these kids because they don't have the tolerance, they don't have the acceptance or patience; you know a theoretical background is good but a street background will be much more efficient.

> Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: One thing I thought was most important to say at that SAG I presented at was if you can't teach them the three Rs, then teach them to be a citizen — some of these kids are almost feral! I think we need to look really hard at what our curriculum really is doing, or not. The school should have a roster of kids who are

involved with Child & Family Services and those kids all need additional

support. There are so many awful things that go on in care [foster]; they

get their stuff ripped off, they could be being sexually abused by another

kid, they could have just come off a horrible night with a bad staff.

Teacher, Connect Program: I think our role as teachers is really, really

important. I think that a lot of teachers are way too judgmental. I think

with a lot of teachers it's their way or no way. I think a lot of people fall

into a trap where they are going to teach page 67 today and page 68

tomorrow because that's what I do and that's how I do this, that was

what I was taught [in Faculty] and this is how I'm supposed to do that. I

think a lot of it has to do with the way adults are to the students.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: So they don't want the coach to think

they're stupid so they'll just go "yeah, yeah". Now you just take that

scenario into the classroom — now the teacher does the same thing

I'm doing, they use that one way direction of communication and the

student's on the other side nodding his head. He doesn't understand

what the person's saying, he doesn't feel comfortable with that person

so he's not going to share nothing with him anyway. Everyone thinks

he's stupid anyway and he does too because everyone tell him that, so he

doesn't want to tell the teacher he doesn't understand; then the teacher

will do this, he'll nod but not do what he has to.

The data appears to support Eith's (2005) assertion that:

> For individuals to be at a lower risk of delinquent activity, they must
>
> have attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief in a social
>
> institution that provides a pro-social or a normative value structure.
>
> The education system is set up to provide these norms and values to
>
> the students, however, the environment may not necessarily fit each
>
> individual student. (p. 9)

This statement reflects much of the data collected in which the participants, who are speaking on behalf of numerous Anti-School Kids, state their belief that mainstream schools are simply not a fit for the marginalized youth, even despite some level of bonding to the institution.
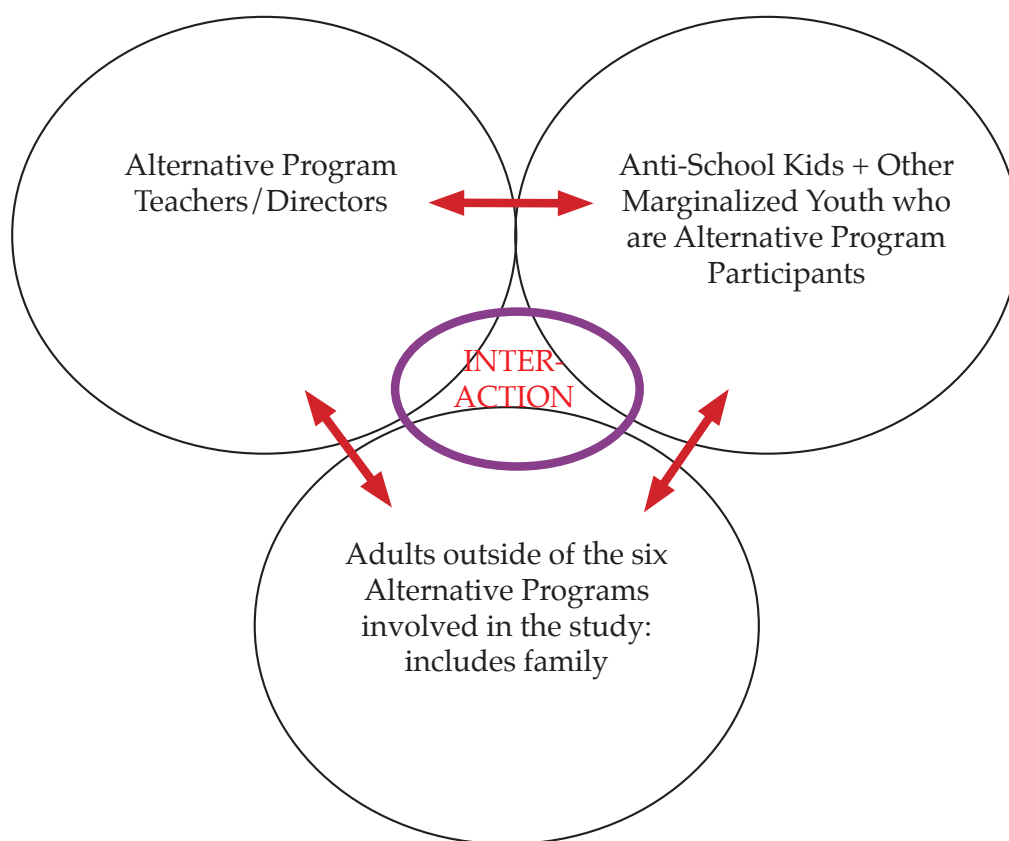
Each program director or teacher was also asked to give their opinions about what they see as challenges within mainstream school. The researcher asked participants to share their observations of challenges faced by marginalized youth which caused them to leave mainstream school — in other words, what prevented the Anti-School Kids they knew from earning the credits required to graduate.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: High school is worse, because there is so much rigidity, and that is what made it fun, and that's what made it really hard at the same time. The way it looks from this end of the street is that you are not holding their attention and more and more we are getting into this sort of 'flip the bird' to academia. There's bad people in society for a reason, we have to learn how to cope with them but when you are coming to a place that you should be able to feel safe at, well, that's something else.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: You know I see the kids, they drop out of school — I've seen a lot of kids drop out after grade 6, they drop out a tremendous amount between 7 and 9; the reason is because up until then they've just been factored through grade 1-6, they don't know how to read properly, they don't know how to apply stuff. You start hearing them saying, "School's boring, it's not fun, it sucks." It's because they feel uncomfortable. A lot of these teachers just don't understand — they send kids home with homework and it comes back not done and they say, "Are you stupid, why didn't you do your homework?" They don't understand that maybe their mom and dad were up cracking all night, or drinking all night and maybe the kid hasn't eaten for 24 hours, there's a lot of things that go on.

The data collected under the category of Interpersonal Dimension added to the Contextual Dimension to give a comprehensive picture of who Anti-School Kids are and who the adults are who successfully work with them. More importantly, the data showed that it is the "inter-action" between people that makes the most difference [Figure 2]. Then, this interaction can be seen as any of the four school bonds referred to by Eith (2005).

FIGURE 2 Inter-Action which leads to engagement

Structural Dimension

This dimension addresses the tangible, day-to-day descriptions of what occurs in the six programs examined in this study. The study participants provide details of the structural parts of their programs and identify both obstacles and facilitators of the learning process within their structures. This includes the buildings, schedules, facilities and amenities, rules, policies and mandated programming.

What is at the Core of these Alternative Programs?

All six of the programs examined in this study were specifically set up to serve marginalized youth. In responding to the interview questions which were designed to find out what was happening in these programs, participants talked about "caring, networking, respecting, responsibilities, expectations, connections, inner discovery, belonging, boundaries, self-worth". These terms serve to frame the conclusions in Chapter 5, as concepts. But what are the mechanics — the actual structures — behind these concepts? All six participants provide some insight into the approaches entrenched within their own structure:

> Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: So a lot of my job now is teaching
>
> people to get it. Every morning, we as a staff meet on the couch and go,
>
> "what's going on with this one, this one, this one..." We triage. We look
>
> at what is going on, we assess the situation. It is like a family — we ask,

"what does he need, what are we going to do first?" I have the most experience, so they pull me in as needed, because they are really quite brilliant but if they are having a really hard time with someone they will ask me what to do.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: The most important thing that I do here is managing the staff of artists, up to 42 of them, and finding new artists to react to what the kids ask us for. So, finding new hip hop dance teachers, just keeping things young and fluid and fresh, is important. So that's number one, managing that core staff of artists and number two is managing community relations. For me, the biggest thing that I have taken on personally is filling in programming gaps. It's actually really important for us because there is a lot of really well-supported and funded programming, so my goal is to enhance it, it's not to compete with it.

Teacher, Connect Program: Our kids learn very early that we are going to expect the best from them and that's not something we are ever going to back down on. My first goal is empowerment. My second goal is obviously because this is a school would definitely be able to find a way to help them reach their goal of graduation. But I wouldn't want it

framed as 'make it to graduation' or 'get them through'. Because that's

not what we do. We don't just get our kids through. It feels good for us

to watch our kids walk across the stage and know that they are going

to something meaningful, be it post-secondary education, or you know

there's hundreds of things; but we don't have any kids that just go to

nothing.

Teacher, Bridge Program: One of our goals is that they can become

independent learners and setting realistic goals for themselves and

be successful in that; and to know that you have to change goals

as situations occur. At the beginning here we always do this sort of

roadmap that goes up and down and say what does this look like in a

student's life? But we always say you know those are little dips in the

road as opposed to road blocks that will stop you; like the road keeps

going but it just a little dip and you will get by it.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: I've been coaching boxing for about

30 years. I've had about 15 national champions. I still produce national

champions but my goal now is to instill life skills into these kids and try

to make them better people. Boxing is only a small phase and the time

that they're there with me gives me an opportunity to do the best I can

with them, and teach them as much as I can about living because that's

really what it is. They don't know how to live, eh? The most important

thing I do is socialize youth.

Teacher, SAFE Program: If a kid gets disruptive, I just say "Hey, you're

not in the mood to work today, you're disrupting others, which we really

don't want, so you need to go home for today." We do call the parent, but

they don't have to come to a re-entry meeting, the kid's just having a bad

day — take a break, come back and we'll start fresh. If things are worse,

like there's drug abuse, violence or complete noncompliance all the time

then there's a formal suspension and I have to involve the administration

which I really try not to do; you know, I take care of my own house.

Participants Drive Programming

One theme that the researcher heard repeatedly from the study participants was

that alternative programming must be responsive to its clientele, sometimes on a *daily*

basis. Representatives of the three school division affiliated programs expressed that

this was a substantial difference between their alternative classes and the rest of the

mainstream classrooms. The directors at the Urban Art Institute and Street Light Inc.

were emphatic about this being at the core of their success. They also both described the

process as "empowering" for the students.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: All of our programming is based on the social determinants of health, beginning with inclusion. If you think of it as an academic, think of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, so a lot of our kids are at that first rung, so we have to deal with that first rung before we can move up. So all the programs start with the first rung, with the intent to move it forward to the place where they can self-actualize but it also encompasses the determinants of health from inclusion all the way to jobs and health and safety. Yes, it's about empowerment, we're not a charity model, it's about teaching differently. They [the kids] direct programming, they show us what to do. They have taught us so much, especially resiliency — that is human capital right there, which we have to capitalize on.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: I think that the best programming that we do is when it's in reaction to what they are asking for. And it's actively in reaction. Basically all of our instructors are required to record feedback from the kids and are required to introduce ideas for programming to them. So we have dialogue with our kids all the time to create our programs and that makes a huge difference; it really does, it means you can say, "Well, what do you guys want to do next week?". They'll decide, with a bit of help and support and then it gets promoted

and it becomes a really positive experience for them because they've

asked for it, now they are seeing it happen — it's empowering.

The Comforts of Home

What if school environments offered what some marginalized youth are missing in

terms of basic needs? Besides acting in the role of parent or caregiver, other aspects of a

home environment were revealed in all six of these alternative programs. The researcher

asked participants what they might consider "comforts of home" and how they thought

it affected the experience of the youth involved in these programs.

Teacher, Connect Program: I guess it is like home in that we have a

fridge, we have food, we have drinks, we have those kinds of things.

Because we are together we are able to have that little social check-in

time in the morning which I think is very important. Our kids really

make it what it is. Even at the end of the day when they aren't in here

for their last class they will still come for the most part and say goodbye

and tell you to have a nice night or whatever. It's what they do though

it's not what we insist on them doing. So I think another thing, too, is our

kids have a voice in here that we value and that we take into account.

Teacher, SAFE Program: And what we do throughout the day is, we have

some rewards, like through physical activity, we'll go for a workout,

we'll go to the gym, we'll interact with other classes, and we also eat

together. We'll have lunch, you know everybody likes that, pizza and

pop, you develop community that way. But the main thing is, that we'll

have a lot of the kids come in and say "I want to graduate."

Teacher, Bridge Program: This is your chance to escape all the really

awful things that are happening in your life. We're consistent, we're here

everyday, we're not going to change, you are going to know what you

get when you walk in the door. I may have had a bad night's sleep and

I may tell you I'm cranky today but you know you are welcome, you

know there'll be something to eat, you know that we'll be here until 2:30,

we're not going to take off, we're not going to go drinking in the middle

of the night, we'll show up for you. Because we provide that stability.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: We give kids options; if

something doesn't float their boat, then there's other options. If they are

in the sewing studio, they might want to sit and draw which is totally

reasonable; we like to have them around us and they know that so we

try to encourage it. We try to instill that we value them being around and

that we like spending time with them and as long as they are willing to

participate and not upset the safety or the positive attitude that's being

created in the studio, then they are welcome.… like they are free to leave

after 20 minutes, if that works for them. The good thing is that we saw

them for that 20 minutes and we caught up with them and they saw us.

Attendance Policies

As a practicing teacher, the researcher was prepared to examine the influence of

attendance when comparing the practices of school division affiliated and non-school

division affiliated alternative programs. A common misconception (according to the

study participants) is that alternative programs do not have regulations or expectations

in terms of student attendance. According to study participants, the reality is quite

different.

Teacher, SAFE Program: We have no attendance policy. Now, do my kids

come late? Yes. Do I lock the door on them? No. Whenever they show

up is fine, obviously within reason; if their day is over at 2:30 and they

show up at 2:15, then I'd send them home. I might talk to them and tell

them it's not appropriate. But with my program, the students who live

a certain distance away (which I think is over 5 kms) are provided with

bus tickets to and from school which they sometimes use for other things

but at least that's provided. We make them aware that they are late. We

sort of have different views, I was raised that you need to be 5 minutes early wherever you go. Now with my kids what I do is I get them in and we say okay you're late, we keep our own attendance books, not on Mayet [the school's central computerized attendance system].

Teacher, Connect Program: In our program you have to be on time. If you're not on time you need to call in and say you're going to be late and our kids are just amazing at that. I don't think we have anybody who doesn't call. And if they don't call, someone will say "why didn't you call?" And then they will start calling. So they have to call if they are going to be late. Habitually late kids, well that's an issue that we deal with their parents or guardians because we have a very close relationship with all our kids' parents. Absenteeism isn't tolerated and I think the kids are very protective, again the kids police themselves because they know they are going to be absent or habitually late they are not going to be in here and they don't want that. We haven't had to let someone go for that for a long, long time. But we have done that and we are prepared to do that. But they don't really test it.

Teacher, SAFE Program: We keep our own attendance booklet, there are kids who may come in once a week and when they come in we just say

we missed you, glad you are here and let's get some stuff done, maybe then some humour or joking. But if they show up late, certain parents request to be informed so we make calls around 9:30 - 10 every day. A lot of it is saying to the kids, "hey if you're not here, then how are you getting your work done? How are you going to get a credit? How are you going to get your math skills if you're not here, or more fluent in reading if you're not here, practicing your reading?" So it is something that they realize themselves, like they get it after awhile. They realize, "If I want to get through school and do something, I actually have to be there and work."

Teacher, Bridge Program: But then if we start to see it as a pattern, we sit down and say let's look at that bus schedule and figure something out. Or we ask them if they want us to call them and get them up. It becomes a seed to talk about how things are going, and to make some changes. We say, "so we're just going to stay for an extra 10 minutes at your noon hour, not to be punitive but so you can get your work done," so then they equate it with work time. It's actually a really good strategy, they don't tend to argue too much; but we don't pursue it because then it becomes a point of friction and we don't need any more of that. The expectation is laid out, it's not mean, it's meant to be a kick in the butt.

And everyday we do something called a Call Back, so if someone's not

here, a staff person will call every single kid. The daily contact keeps us

on top of their attendance and supports them.

The researcher asked these alternative program teachers what other programs Anti-

School Kids could go to if they were not a fit at theirs and all of them discussed their

multiple contacts with numerous other programs. The researcher noted that though

there were school division-affiliated programs mentioned, all were alternative programs

and the others were government youth programs. No mainstream high schools

were mentioned as partners of these alternative programs or as potentially helpful

environments for the Anti-School Kids.

Teacher, Bridge Program: We often make referrals to the T.R.Y. Program

(Training Resources for Youth, under New Directions). The first part is

in class where they talk about communication skills, banking, very life

skill-oriented. The second half is part-time work placement and they

are connected with a counselor and the third is a placement in the work

setting. They get paid every Friday for coming to school so there's the

money motivation and at the end of the program they are either guided

to continue in the work field or they say okay work isn't for you so what

can we look at for school. The Aboriginal Centre is also really good,

especially for the older kids. They can look at doing their Grade 12 GEDs

there and then go into some training programs; we might refer kids to

RB Russell if they are struggling academically. If their connection is with

the Aboriginal traditional cultures we have a strong connection with

Children of the Earth. We just try to figure out what their needs are and

where is a good fit and try to make that transition happen.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: Our organization has a fun

urban edge that isn't really duplicated anywhere else but there's lots

of organizations that are offering free programming that is really high

quality. West End Cultural Centre for the West End has great music

lessons and I'm pretty sure they do art programming sometimes —

don't quote me on that, I'm not sure. Art City is amazing, they are sort

of different from us, they have a lot less outreach and by that I mean

they have a basic studio. There's WASAC (Winnipeg Aboriginal Sports

Association Centre) is great for sports.

Time and Timing

Another theme that surfaced within the Structural Dimension is that of the

constraints related to when courses and activities are offered throughout the day. Of

course, this also includes the availability of and access to staff.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: And another thing, for kids in high school, mornings are the worse times for them in their lives, there's so much growing that is going on there — they are not even conscious, so why do we do that to them? It's about shifting the systems and I'm not sure if it will happen in our lifetime.

Teacher, Bridge Program: We have the luxury that we can plan our day. Nobody tells us what to do. We know our mandate is to get kids credits and that they will be successful and if that means one credit and getting him coming to school that's fine. That's why we plan academics in the morning and then change it in the afternoon — kids can't last that long.

Teacher, Connect Program: We do a lot of work with our kids and their families outside of school hours; we are available to our kids 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and they know that because we don't feel like we can open ourselves up to them, only between 9 and 3:30, because that doesn't work. And I think that means a lot to the kids because they know if they need us it doesn't matter when it is, we're here. And they know how to get in touch with us.

Teacher, Bridge Program: I think even if you polled most teachers and they could come in later and work a bit later on the days things weren't going so great, they would take that. But within the constraints of the way the organization works you have to get the credits and there's a certain timeframe. It's realistic that we have to have timetables because you just can't provide a service in large group settings and say, like with a hospital, oh yeah just come in and do your shift whenever you want and if an emergency arises then we'll see what we can do. You can't do that.

Teacher, SAFE Program: The problem is sometimes I only have them for a short period of time because of age constraints are what sort of limits us in Special Ed because what they say is that once that kid is 16 , if he's not integrated then he's going to have to go off to the next program; "okay, you're here until you're 16, if you can be integrated we can support you with that but if there's no possibility of you being integrated once you are 16 you have to move on."

Professional Dimension

No matter how alternative (in location, timing, scheduling, programming) a program for youth may be, a teaching-learning environment carries particular

expectations in terms of the teacher/student roles. Certified teachers are bound by

professional codes as well as societal expectations, as well as provincial curriculum

and legal obligations. Program directors, instructors, coaches and other adults filling

the teaching role have similar expectations put upon them by the institutions and stake

holders such as board members who represent the general public the programs serve.

The researcher grouped the questions regarding role expectations into the category of

Professional Dimension.

Expecting and Respecting

   First the researcher discussed what the teachers and program directors expected

of the youth who attended their programs. Everyone agreed that the perception

among educators and members of the public was that alternative program teachers'

expectations were much lower than those of mainstream educators. In fact, all six of the

participants talked about having flexible, or fluid, levels of expectations but stressed

how critical it is to *consistently* maintain expectations.

> Teacher, Bridge Program: So they know the expectations, and the
>
> reason we say that is that a good working environment is required and
>
> everyone needs to focus and if you're boobs are hanging out you can
>
> guarantee the boy beside you is not going to get any work done, and also
>
> it will make us feel uncomfortable because we are right here.

Teacher, CONNECT Program: We do have some kids that are like that
— they find out when they get here, that your expectations are to work
and all the other kids know the expectations, then that behaviour or
that perspective is discouraged by the kids. They are the ones who say:
"Could you be quiet, I am trying to get work done." And I'm going, oh
yeah, good job, they say it for me. Yes, there is a lot of strength in peer
encouragement and discouragement in a respectful manner so that's
interesting because you take away all the elements of wanting to miss
and you provide positive role modeling for reasons not to miss, so it's a
good combination. We don't force compliance. We expect compliance all
the time and I think there's a difference.

Teacher, SAFE Program: So yeah, my expectations have changed but
they've sort of changed in a more positive way in that it's more realistic
because you can't always cram that circular peg into the square hole,
much as I like to try.

Teacher, Bridge Program: When students start here we say we expect
them to be on time, however , we realize that not everyone will be on
time. So we say, what we want you to do, as soon as you come in you

just get right to work. That's when we expect you at your desk, pull your

work out and expect you working

Teacher, Connect Program: We have really high expectations of all of

our kids like we expect them to be the best that they can be at all times

and sometimes that's really hard because we just don't ever give up.

But as far as changing them? No. I think why would I want everybody

to be like everybody else? No, we try to work with our kids' strengths.

I believe if you're an alternative kid you're an alternative kid and why

would I want to make you anything different? We expect our kids to

be dressed appropriately, I mean we expect the same things that are

expected outside that door [referring to Code of Conduct Dress Code].

But language is something we are really really strict about, and manners.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: If they don't want to be there then

they are asked before they come into the studio then they are reminded

of our goals and they are really simple with the younger kids, we don't

even use these rules with the older kids at the Gallery — but it's "Be

safe, be respectful and have fun." which is way more effective than just

general positive values. And that's it. And that goes back to the Seven

Teachings model where we use those values to maintain.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: They know you have to go to school. Negativity draws negativity; I don't want people hanging around that don't go to school or who get in trouble, that are into gangs or drugs. For example, Damien who helps me coach now and was a three time national champion, when he was 16 he quit school and I kicked him out of the club and that sent a very powerful message to all of the kids because they're thinking well if he's going to kick out someone who's been with him since he's 9 and he's 16 now, had 90 fights and is a 3-time national champion, if he's going to kick him out of the club for not following rules and regulations, what's he going to do to me, I'm a nobody! I have to stick to my guns. They try to come back in, but it's zero-tolerance.

Bargaining to Learn

Along with having explicit expectations, another component of encouraging engagement from the Anti-School Kids that surfaced both during the literature review and the interviews was the practice of bargaining. The researcher became curious if these alternative programs used bargaining and if so, how. The participants offered the following information:

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: There's one of three ways they usually leave the gym: they get kicked out, they lose interest, or they move on. I don't phone the kids or beg the kids — they have to come here themselves, they have to show the initiative to come. I make things easier for them, I drive them home when we're done and sometimes I pick them up. For starters, I have a good relationship with them, you know, they totally trust me. So in other words, if you're not interested in being a positive person, then there's really nothing I can do for you. I've learned, I have to let them go, because they don't want to help themselves so I can't help them.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: So I don't have behaviour problems [like they would have in mainstream school] because if they have an attitude problem, then I say "If you don't like it here, then hit the road!" It's that simple — and it instantly changes them, changes the paradigm, it's instant respect, like "Wait, I do need you."

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: I guess that's the one example where we really hold to forcing conformity is that we don't allow gang involvement in this space. And we don't allow it in our studios. Our biggest concern is gang involvement and illegal graffiti involvement.

We take in kids to our Urban Canvas program who have been involved with illegal graffiti and we try to redirect that into more positive venues. And when they're in the Urban Canvas program and their illegal graffiti is spotted fresh in the city, it's as good as being kicked out, although it is more of a process than that. We talk it through and there is retribution.

Teacher, Bridge Program: We bargain a lot with whether you're going to be a student here or not; because we do have behavioural issues here. You start with the expectations laid out so it's pretty clear what we expect. We expect you to be respectful, we expect you to work hard, we expect you to work with us, you don't have to agree with us but you do have to agree to disagree in a respectful manner. So our bargaining chip there might be well you know we still need to carry our class on, we still need to move forward. If you don't think this is going to work for you then what are some things you could do? Or maybe you need to go home, maybe you need to go for a walk. But the biggest is if they do keep their spot here or not. Just because they are marginalized youth as you have put it doesn't mean that they can treat people poorly. So we often use bus tickets as bargaining tools; we say well you can walk home and cool off or you can choose to behave.

What About Life Skills?

    Alternative programming is sometimes described as practical learning programs

where delinquent or non-academic youth could be taught life skills. The researcher

asked all the participants what role life skills played in their programming.

> Teacher, Connect Program: I would say the life skills we teach are being
>
> responsible and following through with what goals that you set and
>
> being at school and learning how to be a good student because that is our
>
> ultimate goal is that they get credits and hopefully transition back into
>
> either a work setting or to another school setting. That would be the type
>
> of life skills approach that we take, so it's knowledge-based applying to
>
> decision-making. As far as laundry and that no, but we do cook once in
>
> awhile; so I would say life skills is something we don't do. We do clean
>
> up at the end of the day that all the kids are expected to pitch in; so they
>
> might learn how to take the garbage out or sweep up or do dishes.

> Program Director, Urban Art Institute: We try to incorporate basic life
>
> skills through all of our programs and that's everything from patience,
>
> respect for diversity, simply treating human beings like human beings
>
> and respecting each other. Certainly patience is a really interesting one
>
> and also positive self-identification and positive communication.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: So in terms of life skills, basically what happens is that I demand certain behaviour from them. They don't pay a monthly due, but really they are paying because they are learning how to behave in a positive fashion. They learn respect. So these are little things I'm teaching them at the gym, how to clean up after themselves. Teaching them accountability and respect, it's no different than at home, I'm just coming at it from a different angle, using the boxing.

Teacher, Connect Program: Our program is a very academic program, that is what our focus is. We have a component of community service built in to our program. We don't have a life skills component that is separate. I guess we are teaching those things all the time but it's just a natural part of what we do in here because we are a community in here, as phony as that might sound. And we are. For sure.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: How does it work here? It's common sense; it's being smarter than the kid, it's taking some of the stuff you know, the life skills you know as a resourced adult with social capital and tricking them into learning things; sometimes it can be straightforward and very simple. In terms of the life skills component,

the kids drive everything — if you ask them, they'll tell you what they need, and it's about listening — it's really simple; listening and then responding. And it's about relationships.

Teacher, Bridge Program: We try to network with outside organizations that we feel our students will need access to so we'll have people from Klinic in talking to them about medical services, and Resource Assistance for Youth, Teen Talk comes in, YES the employment place, public health nurses, diabetes centre. There's a lot. We spread it out and we do prepare them for the topics and they are all totally teen related so as far as life skills, it would be about good decision making, and issues and situations that come up. We also have people from mental health come in to talk about suicide, mental health issues. We'll often have people come in and talk about gangs and how to get out of them; ah, police officers once in awhile coming in talking to them about some of the implications of their charges if there are those. That would be the type of life skills approach that we take, so it's knowledge-based applying to decision-making. We'll provide some direction to youth places that can provide a bridge between agencies.

Working with Others, Including Families

In order to work effectively with the Anti-School Kids, the teacher has to respect the family relationships those students have and work with whatever resources those youth have available to them. In other instances, like with the following story about this young man, the teacher only has the individual to work with and that is the reality.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: Well, there's been multiple instances of kids who take three steps forward and then five steps back as far as emotional development and ability to communicate. There's an example of one young child, a male who's about 8 years old now, who's been coming to our programming probably since he was 4; he's been walking himself to the studio, maybe in the accompaniment of cousins at the beginning but now he's really independent and he's very aggressive. Physically he can be violent, certainly he's in crisis all the time, but we've seen great changes with him. His communication has gone through the roof; when he's in the right studio and there's the right mood, he's so, so good; not good as in well-behaved but he'll share in a positive way and he'll open up to the staff that he's really used to and comfortable with.

Teacher, Bridge Program: Because it's not just a one kid thing, it's a family issue, you know. And actually once kids start in our program we will get siblings I think partly because of the connection with the parents

and the staff. And that is the beauty of our job — and sometimes its

so sad — but we do get to know our families, not just the kids but the

families really well.

Teacher, Connect Program: You know, the fact that their parent, a lot of

their parents are drug addicts or alcoholics, but we still have to be really

respectful of the fact that that's still the one thing in their life that they

know for sure belongs to them. So you're always treading that really thin

line. And that's why a lot of times with our kids, when they need help

with their parents, well, we do that a lot. We're the ones going to the

hospital with them when their parents have passed out or OD'd. We do

that all the time. But again, this is what they have, and it would be real

easy to not try to, to have them move away from that; I mean you have

to put yourself in their place — they have nothing. And if that's the one

person, then we have to try our best to make this work. But I think the

biggest thing for me is that people forget about all of that and they have

this idea that because you've come into the school that you are going to

act like a certain person.

Teacher, Bridge Program: That's actually a strength of this place is that

because we work with so many other people. The first will be their

parents or the adult that's important to them, whether that's a bail

worker or an aunt or uncle or a relative because we have that regular

contact that is such a strength so when the days are bad or not very

focused you can try and dip into that.

Teacher, Bridge Program: Well, having them here and getting to know

the kids, and then when you find out you know someone's having a

bad time and they need time out from the parents then you can say

well remember when RaY was here they talked about McDonald Youth

Centre? And they have that emergency shelter on Mayfair, why don't we

go have a look at it? Or how about N'dinaway? And Teen Talk the kids

really like. I know a number of kids have gone on their advisory board.

That provides just a good network for the kids to know that they are not

alone, that there are those agencies.

The Bridge Program teacher revealed much about the well-known secret to success

with Anti-School Kids — regular contact in and out of the classroom with both the

student and one step further, regular contact with all of these who support that youth

— family members, girlfriend/boyfriend, bail support worker, group home worker —

every other person who cares about the education of that student. Because there are

many youth with sometimes less-than-expected adult support, a teacher has to adapt

to working with whomever has that caregiver relationship with that student. It may

be that student's lesbian partner whom she lives with, even if she's only 16. Also, the

participants revealed the value of networking with other organizations and alternative

programs, and of course, families.

> Teacher, Connect Program: I think also the relationship that we have
>
> with their caregivers, the kids don't have a problem with that, they like
>
> that. And I think for a lot of those people, this is something that's really
>
> new to them as well. Yes, and again that takes all different forms too. A
>
> lot of times we have to go to them, meet them somewhere where they're
>
> comfortable to be, you know those kinds of things.

But the data reveals that if the youth has no family, often there are other agencies

involved in that student's life and it would be advisable to work together with people

from those agencies. The researcher assumes this is the reason social workers and child

psychologists from the school division clinic are on-site a few days a week and are

available for referrals from the teaching staff. It may also benefit all involved if teachers

from mainstream schools could talk to each other first, then reach out to family, friends

or other involved agencies.

> Teacher, Bridge Program: Well, we don't have that luxury in the
>
> classroom, you don't even have the chance to go over and say, "You look

awful today, what's up?" Because that's usually how it starts, right? Not

having 'talking time' really does a disservice to human beings. There's

lots of dialogue and that's where we are able to draw on the other

supports.

The researcher asked the participants where they would recommend students move

on to if they just could not or would not stay in their program.

Teacher, Connect Program: Well, they can go back into regular

programming here at this school. We haven't had many kids leave.

But we have had the odd one who is — well, two actually— who went

back into regular programming and within a week and a half they were

begging to come back, and yes I took them back. And it was fine then, it

worked out. There are other programs that we would feed into I mean

again it's very individualized for the student, like it depends on who the

student is; we certainly use Argyle for certain types of kids. When I'm

looking at a student trying to find something that is going to fit better,

the first thing I start thinking about is who's out there that this kid may

be able to have a relationship with.

Teacher, SAFE Program: We have another senior high program at another division high school which is the exact same program as mine, so sometimes we'll do trades. We'll each take a kid and try him somewhere else. Then there's a bunch of other programs like the Code or T.R.Y., where they get paid every week to come to classes. Sometimes some of the group homes will get day programs; senior high RB Russell program which is the one where they go out one day and paint a fence, next day they build a fence — they do hands-on stuff that is really good. So those are some of their options, oh an our Off-Campus program. The main thing is that we try to make it fit, we can't be everything to everyone.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: It's not about more artists in the schools, it's about stronger, positive youth role models and looking at that really seriously because it's that engagement that will follow through with them, build friendships that are strong and trustworthy. I think that will ignite passion further down the road for all sorts of things. I think most kids would agree, they trust and love their teachers as parental sort of figures (not always) but as ignitors, it's not always fresh, [because] it's the same teacher all year. I think that it's really about constantly having somebody who you're really convinced values your culture — and by that I mean youth culture, and recognizes it as a

valuable culture.

In other words, teachers can invite a youth mentor into his/her classroom, someone who she respects and has a relationship with. They work together with the students; the students respect the youth mentor and enjoy his/her teaching. They also develop a respect for their teacher because she brought in that youth mentor and because the kids' witness the respect between the teacher and the mentor. It is a win-win-win for all involved.

> Program Director, Urban Art Institute: I don't have to be the mentor, it can be my job to find a good one for a student and send that kid's life in a certain direction. I can show them new possibilities, I can be the facilitator. And what an important role for a teacher, right? To identify what's going to make the difference here in getting this kid really interested.

As mentioned earlier, the participants talked about how the students are the ones who drive programming. As we delved deeper into the professional dimension and how programs overlap, it became clear that other agencies and organizations also drive programming.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: At each site where we program,

we have a partnership table with about 30 people sitting at it, who I

react to. So you can look at it as a tree and each site has a committee

or a board, each site also has the city's involvement. I have to find

out what they are looking for. And a huge part of that process is not

duplicating programming; so it's about keeping up to date with what

else is going on and with who is around. And all those little communities

that I talked about, around each studio, like we base even the timing

of our workshops on them. So we support that activity, we want them

to be engaged in it. I take that really seriously, just the flexibility of our

program.

In Addition: A Fifth Dimension

Now that the data had been analyzed and the literature review completed, the

researcher asks the reader to reflect on his/her own practice as an educator or someone

who works with marginalized youth, using the next section as a filter for examining

current practices. This fifth category was a result of the fresh data generated from

these interviews — the information was created by the participants as a result of their

interaction with the researcher at that moment in time. These suggestions are a result of

the participants using the dimensions as a lens to examine their practices.

Let us begin with these questions to the reader: What do you do when you

encounter a student in your classroom who is obviously a member of the anti-school subculture? Do you ignore her or wish she would disappear? Do you punish her consistently for being late? Or do you use the signs of marginality or at-risk of failure as a sign that this student needs your help? Do you put some alternative methods and materials in place for her? Do you dig into your toolbox and diversify, tapping into your stores of creative problem-solving techniques? Do you call her social worker and go for coffee?

If teachers are struggling with these issues, they are not alone. The researcher believes that educators want to serve the anti-school subculture — they want to learn how to find a square hole for a square peg — but where are the answers? There are also the demands of time, which mainstream teachers know all too well — one hour classes, 30 students, 2 minutes per student. The following summarizes participants' comments reflecting their experiences — and proven strategies — which may help teachers who are struggling to work with Anti-School Kids.

1. Teach what is most important RIGHT NOW

> Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: So you have them for a very small clock — what are you going to do with them during that short amount of time? What are the most significant things that they have to learn? Is it algebra? I don't think so. If you don't know your audience that you engage every day — you don't know if they are in a group home or if

they slept under a bridge last night — would that alter your teaching?
And what we do differently here for these kids is that we try to do what
makes sense, not what people tell us to do, for no good reason.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: Because I know that boxing is only a
small phase in their life and it's taken me awhile to get that mentality;
that when you start dealing with wanting to make these kids better
and improving their lives, you realize that boxing is only a small phase
and the time that they're there with me gives me an opportunity to do
the best I can with them, and teach them as much as I can about living
because that's really what it is. They don't know how to live, eh?

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: But we don't do the classroom thing;
it's not really effective, we just do it 'as needed'. We look at a kid as a
unique individual, we look at their issues as unique and usually they
are — they are combinations of the same issues we've seen but different
combinations. So we unravel those issues one-by-one, kid-by-kid, case-
by-case.

2. Focused Goal-setting

Teacher, Bridge Program: We do goal-setting three times a year and you

outline it and right on the report card it says you only have two more

units to do, so just be here and do them! So your discussions about

changing goals and looking at goals are a daily thing. And that's very

helpful; I mean if we all did that, took a look at, we'd see how focussed

we'd be, right. And the whole thing is you want kids to be successful so

you continue making changes and adaptations and expectations change.

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: We ask them a lot of the time their

goals and a lot of them are really interested in teaching — and that's at

the Gallery, like they're 12 but they can't wait to grow up and teach at

the Gallery and beyond. Like one of our Youth Committee members said,

"I'd love to teach hip hop dance in Thompson." She told us that on her

own, she made that up, she decided she wanted to go back to Thompson

and teach other people, so I think that's a really good indicator, creating

a leadership state of mind and self-worth, like you've got something

valuable to share and getting them used to sharing.

3. Foster That Human Connection

Program Director, Urban Art Institute: After that lesson where you

learned how to draw a horse, did you teach anybody else how? Since

you learned the steps, did you think to teach anybody else?" All of them

say yes; so now it's not just 'here's a horse I drew' but 'Mom I'll show you how to do it' and that's a really important step. And that feeling of them being proud, that they can be a teacher, is also important.

Teacher, SAFE Program: I just try to relate to my kids and just make them realize that they can live and do stuff in life, like they can be contributing members of society — they can find their place in this world, that's really it. I mean, four kids that I taught have died already and I still think about one of them a lot. He's a kid that should have stayed at this school and everybody embraced this young kid but he just didn't have a chance.

Teacher, Bridge Program: Yeah but you know that we know in our field that, and one of the strengths here, is that you connect with people that care about you. Like with this young man seemed to respond to that and even if he slept in it would be every day and people would say why are you phoning him he still not coming in on time; because it's that connection that makes him know that there's someone that wants him here. And if I got too busy or for whatever reason I wasn't able to phone him and he'd come in and I'd go "I'm so sorry I forgot to call you." And he'd go "Yeah I was wondering what was up with that." And I'd ask him, "do you want me to stop calling? Am I being too pushy?" And he'd

say, "No, no that's okay.

Teacher, Connect Program: I think it's about working with the whole person as opposed to just what you might want to see which isn't always the truth. And we have to treat every one of our kids differently, every single one. And I don't think it's that hard to do. I mean we have a basic set of expectations that's the same for everybody but how you get there has to be different for everybody.

4. Find the Right Fit

Teacher, Bridge Program: I think with all the kids we have here the big thing is is that there is so much structure and there are not as many options for being flexible especially because life kind of gets in the way with a lot of the kids. The kids that we have here tend to have a lot of personal issues going on in their family which are often very strongly connected to poverty and that ends up getting in the way because if you are hungry or your mom doesn't come home that night or someone's involved in gangs you can't focus on school work. And if you've been up 'til 3 in the morning fighting or partying, how on earth are you supposed to get into class, and after 4 classes missed are going to shut the door on you? So why should they bother going anyways?

Teacher, Connect Program: The one-size-fits-all is a way easier way to do your job, but it's not very effective. And also paying more attention to what that kid's life is about. Just because they walked into the doors of the school doesn't mean that all of that isn't still part of who they are and what they represent and what they believe. And I mean there's a very fine line there, we juggle with that all the time.

5. Flexibility is Key

Teacher, Bridge Program: But you know, there are a lot of kids who are super successful with the way a [mainstream] school operates. And that's okay for those folks but for the ones who are not successful then alternative programming definitely helps meets their needs and I think the parents are so thankful there's an alternative way for their kids to be successful and to stay in school . Really, 14-year-olds and 15-year-olds should not be out working, they should be in school.

Teacher, SAFE Program: In our class we will deal with it in a different way in that we'll put up with a little more, like when a kid swears he's not going to get suspended and sent home. Also, because I have these kids a lot longer, and they don't all need to have every single credit by the end of this year, leaving me more time to deal with other issues,

because social work is involved in our program and occasionally

guidance, so kids have other issues — so what I'm saying is the

flexibility I have to do all of these things is key.

6. Keep Going

Teacher, Bridge Program: I think what we try to do is to create hope in

their lives and we really focus on goal-setting and we start with credits

but in the long-term it's about goal-setting, about changing behaviours,

about changing habits, being driven with purpose.

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: For me, 30 years with inner-city

kids and you think you've heard it all but now we have a bunch of new

kids, new circumstances. There is a demand for services on every corner,

there's such a lack of recreation, that's the other huge piece, that's the

turning point. Especially for Aboriginal kids, who learn by doing — they

don't learn by the lecture model.

This is one of the many, many examples of alternative programs pointing young

people in the right direction, down a path that fits rather than trying to jam a square

peg in a round hole.

7. Choice or No Choice?

One of the questions that arose from this study has been: To what extent do marginalized youth (Anti-School Kids) make choices of their *free will* to reject school and not graduate? As stated in Chapter One, the researcher believes that it is more likely a product of the youth's marginalized state of being, not a willful act of anti-authority behaviour that results in "choosing" not to behave in ways which facilitate learning in a mainstream school. The study participants expressed strong opinions about the term "choice" being applied to Anti-School Kids.

> Program Director, Urban Art Institute: They go totally free, of their choice, so they make the decision themselves to come to art programming which already says quite a bit about who our participants are. They are not forced and they don't come with their parents; they bring themselves. So already I think the term 'At-Risk Youth' is totally — or 'High-Risk Youth' — is totally bizarre to us because they are already making a really positive decision to just drag themselves out. So it already says a lot about who we already program for. We do do outreach and we try to reach beyond that group that would bring themselves and we try to engage other kids but we have a great core of about 1000 participants and that adds up to 10,000 participations per year. It's huge; we have 28 workshops a week. We measure on participation, which is by choice, but also based on feedback, like recorded breakthroughs with

the kids, where they say, "This was the greatest day of my life, I've never done anything like this before."

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: But I know definitely where these kids are headed: murder, home invasions, sexual assault — but those are the ones who chose not to stay in boxing, the ones who chose not to stay in school, those are the ones who chose to live a negative life. And I shouldn't use the word 'chose', I mean I guess they did make a choice but with the limited amount of information they have they may not have felt that they had a choice. Basically I try to provide them with positive alternatives and information because it's all about making choices. I know myself I made a lot of bad choices in my life and if I look back now — well, those choices were simply made with the information I had at the time, which wasn't very much.

Teacher, Connect Program: What I think is the key to it being successful is that it is a program of choice. Nobody is forced to come into this program and I think that's huge. And it's a program of choice at all times. Consequently the program doesn't have a negative connotation to it.

8. Build on Past Successes

Executive Director, Street Light Inc.: If I could change the school in one way, it would be having the teachers talk to one another, maybe everyday. Because what's happening in Art may not be happening in History, so you to have a conversation with the English teacher, to be able to tell them how fantastic those students perform in your room and talk about what works would be incredible. Why don't we give her the option, why can't she have me as her English teacher? That's how we work. Also what's great is we have built in support in other areas that we need right on site, such as our LPN who we call 'Nursey'. And another great thing, if your guidance counselors can turn into advocates, and by advocates I mean you become familiar with your resources in your community, you have a really good understanding of their background and family, you try to resource the family, not just the kid.

Teacher, SAFE Program: You know, when I have LAC kids come back to me, they call and they are happy, they are in their 20s and they are married, they have a family and a job, and they love what they are doing but they still miss being at this school, in our classroom. Now that is the reward, hearing that. The rewards are you can see the change in them, emotionally and just mentally really, yeah, it's a nice feeling.

Head Coach, North Syde Boxing: I have a lot of success stories, people

who have been in my life for 15 years, started out with me when they

were 10 and who have overcome all of the various challenges they've

had and have graduated from high school. They've bought homes and

got married and made it in life. You have to instill in these kids that you

need an education. And more importantly, you have to instill in them

that you have to work for the rest of your life — everybody works! So the

better education you have, the better job you're going to have.

The findings of this study show that working and being able to succeed with

marginalized youth appears to involve a complex mix of both the adults and the youth

as explained in the Contextual and Interpersonal Dimension, which results in the critical

"Inter-Action", which can and does lead to engagement and subsequent learning. The

data reveals that along with the barriers in the Professional and Structural Dimension,

there are also facilitators of learning which appear to work for the Anti-School Kids.

In considering all of the data collected for this study, the researcher has come to the

conclusion that it is all about the people practicing a particular "relational literacy"

which was laid out in the fifth dimension. It is this ability to engage in relational literacy

— or "inter-action" which creates an environment for providing opportunities for

success in alternative programs for marginalized youth, particularly with Anti-School

Kids.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Completing the Story

Remember Cassie? We left her story when she was living with her Grandma Flo and ready to start Grade 12. The researcher described her as a tough-looking and acting girl, as a member of the anti-school subculture, and as an unsuccessful student who looked as if she would never graduate. However, the move back to her Grandma Flo's was also a catalyst for change at school. Here's how her story ends.

When Cassie started Grade 12, she allowed her guidance counselor into her life. She continued to use drugs and alcohol because that was what her friends did, but during school hours she started going to class. First thing in the morning she would go for the free breakfast and started helping with the lunch program since she was always there needing food. Teachers were skeptical and not sure how to react to the new Cassie who actually came to class, but they accepted her as any other student starting fresh in September.

What worked against Cassie achieving all that she could that year? Again, her identity. She was known by her peers and adults in the building as an uncooperative, somewhat rude and obnoxious, non-attender; a rule-breaker who could disrupt school at a moment's notice. These identity markers stayed with Cassie though she didn't act on them like she did the previous year and was rarely suspended or in any trouble. Her interactions with the teachers became positive and good-natured, not confrontational.

What worked for Cassie that year? The guidance counselor got her involved with volunteering at Winnipeg Harvest; this turned into volunteering for other Winnipeg social organizations, which led to Cassie to qualify for a free YM/

YWCA membership. She also became manager of the Girls' Volleyball team; she had always wanted to play but had no experience, yet she loved the game. With her help, the team achieved many victories.

All of these activities created a new dimension to Cassie's identity which could be described as Pro-School. If not, these activities certainly fit better with school achievement than those associated with anti-school behaviour which Cassie had continued almost out of habit, not because they were an essential part of her being. That June, Cassie received the United Way High School Volunteer of the Year award not just because of the hours spent on her commitments but for the heart she put into her efforts.

Academically, that school year was difficult for Cassie. She was several grade levels behind in her reading and comprehension, not to mention that she had little practice starting and finishing projects and assignments. She also needed help with study and note-taking skills as she had not put these to use in high school. She had maintained some of her volunteering and managed to quit drugs. However, it became apparent that she would not graduate in June. Cassie agreed to start in an off-campus alternative program the following September. She was one of the five lucky ones that year to get a spot at the school's Bridge Program.

Cassie had developed a sense of pride in herself and Industrial Arts Collegiate. She had invested in the school, and the teachers had returned her interest. It was hard for Cassie to leave her home school, but she wanted to graduate and go to university. Cassie grew up and out of her anti-school behaviour and attitudes and was ready do what she needed to do to finish this phase of her life and move on. The guidance counselor assured her that the small setting at the Bridge Program would help her focus on her work and she would have assistance every step of the way since there were so few students. She would still be part of the Industrial Arts

Collegiate family, though, and that was very important to her. Everything went

the way it was supposed to that year, and Cassie graduated and planned to attend

university.

Summary of the Study

Since the purpose of this research project was to examine the contextual,

interpersonal, structural and professional dimensions of alternative education programs

using qualitative data, the researcher would like to summarize using Cassie's story to

illustrate how the data provided some insights and allowed the researcher to solidify

concepts. The researcher had expected the study to reveal how alternative programs

could possibly create an environment of respect, acceptance and stability which would

address the specific needs of marginalized youth. The researcher then asserts that this

environment will help students be successful, as summarized by the themes of caring,

consistency, timeliness and priorities. These themes surfaced as the researcher was

developing coding categories and were noted during the transcription process and

continued to emerge as common perspectives held by the participants throughout the

data analysis.

Caring

Despite her delinquent behaviour and appearance, teachers and other adults in the

building took an interest in Cassie. They forgave her, they paid attention to her, and

they involved her. The data collected from the six participants suggested that there were

four specific forms of caring:

i) Teachers called home when students were late or absent, not once, but every day for several months;

ii) Teachers provided one-on-one attention to the student's social, emotional and intellectual needs. The teacher/director did so by looking at each student on a case-by-case basis. They noted characteristics of marginality and adjusted their own attitudes and actions to do what was required for that student to learn;

iii) Teachers altered the content and delivery of program material to suit that student;

iv) Teachers helped provide basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, assistance and communication. This does not mean teachers used their personal funds or supplies but that they used their resources and access to get these for the student. This is where it is crucial to work with people from outside agencies — knowing where to get the help for these kids. In other words, teachers used their social capital to benefit these students.

Consistency

Cassie was seen by the same school counselor for all three years she attended Industrial Arts Collegiate. The counselor was the one person Cassie could count on. When she was moved to the Bridge Program, she was taught by two teachers and the same educational assistant every day, all year, all subjects, and she maintained consistent contact with the guidance counselor.

The study participants described how they are there day after day, month after

month, year after year for the students and these people are persistent — they do not

give up on these youth, no matter how hard they are pushed away. Such consistent

contact over a prolonged period could be seen as providing a counterbalance to the

inconsistency that marginalized youth experience for much of their lives.

Timeliness

Cassie's continuously changing life situation was dealt with immediately, not put

off until next semester or next year and on an as-needed basis. Intelligent educators

realized the priority of what she needed to know and when. Teaching Cassie about

community health resources turned out to be more valuable than that day's spelling

quiz.

Timeliness was a common theme discussed by the alternative program teachers

and directors. Understanding and flexibility are imperative when dealing with

marginalized youth. These alternative teachers talked about how they are not held

hostage by their schedules — what the student needs to learn right now takes priority

over the curriculum. This does not mean that Math and English assignments do not get

accomplished; it means they discuss home for an half-hour, then do the reading and

answer the questions. That half-hour makes a crucial difference. The inflexible timetable

of a mainstream program does not allow for this on-the-spot change in priorities.

This is another illustration of how it is better for both teacher and student, in the

long-term, to not attempt to jam a square peg into a round hole. As these participants

stress, give the peg some time and attention and it will soften and fit just fine into that

hole — when it is ready!

Priorities

This topic directs us to look at our priorities as educators and take a second look at

the bigger picture. What happens when we set priorities based on institutional factors

rather than individual factors? According to the Industrial Arts Collegiate Athletic

Code, there is no way Cassie should have been allowed to manage the volleyball team.

As seen in Chapter Four, rules, policies and other such inanimate objects get in the way

of the human business of education. Credits, semesters, exams, and reporting periods

can all hinder the relational aspects of learning. Also, when educators set priorities

based on the structural and professional dimensions and not on the contextual and

interpersonal dimensions, this creates a roadblock to learning. This is especially true

in the case of Anti-School Kids, who are marginalized and have less access to many

intangibles like social capital and tangibles like shelter, which help young people

successfully graduate from high school.

Also, when educators base behaviour indicators of the dominant culture in the pro-

school category and place the identity markers and behaviour of Anti-School Kids in

the anti-school category, without deeper analysis, it can impede successful engagement.

For one, it capitalizes on the power imbalance between the Anti-School Kids, the

teachers and the other students — and deepens it. All of the participants commented

on how they believe their job is to empower these marginalized students, to push them

from behind but not act for them. In addition, they actually like these kids and they

respect their identity. They demonstrate this by not expecting students to change their

appearance or behaviours that do not have an effect on learning.

Clarification Arising from the Study

In Chapter Two, the researcher looked at Eith's theory regarding how delinquent

youth behaviour can be linked to weakened social bonds. The researcher thought

the data might reveal information about Anti-School Kids' bonds to school, family,

community and other clubs and associations (which all translates to how much social

capital they have access to). As it turns out, the participants in the study could only

comment on the bonds these marginalized youth had to school because that is where

their tangible, or measurable, connection was to that student. Therefore, the researcher

has to leave information about Anti-School Kids' bonds to family, community and other

clubs and associations for another study. The data agreed with Eith's observations

regarding the strength of the bond to school correlated with school success and/or

engagement — and that bond is the human connection those students have with their

teacher — it is as simple as that.

In the case of North Syde Boxing, the researcher could claim the strength of

this bond to a "club or association" did indeed strengthen the bond to school and

thereby lessened any delinquent behaviour. This is because one of the conditions of membership in the club is continued attendance at school and no delinquent behaviour. So yes, here these bonds helped strengthen each other and enhanced student learning.

As the participants' comments illustrate in Chapter Four, the participants' observations do support the researcher (and Eith's) idea that weakened social bonds to school results in anti-school (delinquent) behaviour and subsequent failure to achieve credits within the mainstream system. Of course, the researcher realizes and thinks it is necessary to clarify that — particularly with marginalized youth — it is never *one* deficiency which results in failure; it is a complex network of issues, not to mention where the youth is in terms of cognitive, physical and social development.

The researcher had stated that "due to weakened family bonds and behaviours in school like aggression and verbal abuse (resulting in weakened social bonds to school also), these students may have no significant adults in their lives. What are the implications of this?" The researcher had described Anti-School Kids as not having significant adults in their lives and stated that this created problems in school that resulted in school failure. The analyses of the data showed that as much as this may be true, it is the remaining people in those marginalized youths' lives that also help with their new kind of success in alternative programming. The adults in these programs use those who care about the Anti-School Kids to help support them along their life path. This may not be a blood relative or a family member, but simply someone linked to that youth through the system, such as a social worker. Just as the absence of a significant

adult can work against a student, so can the (re)appearance of one help get that youth

back on track. This is one of the more significant findings of this study, and helps clarify

the role of (family) social bonds in relation to engaging Anti-School Kids in learning.

Recommendations for Practice

Those who are interested in working with Anti-School Kids should consider the

following steps to engage these students in some form of learning. The message to

educators is to recognize at-risk indicators as a call to action bears repeating at this time.

This would signify the initiation of a plan for that student. Suggestions derived from

the analyses of the data to add to ones, current toolbox of problem-solving tools are as

follows:

1. Undertake the research necessary to support learning. This is the stage where

you consult with others, possibly the guidance counselor or the student's social worker.

As the Executive Director of Street Light dubbed it, you "triage". This stage is when

the educator expands her circle of knowledge and brings in additional expertise and

support.

2. Recognize the characteristics and personal challenges faced by a marginalized

youth. Determine that student's social identity using her characteristics and whatever

other information you can gather about her. Make a list. Ask her questions. Start a case

file of your own.

3. Take an inventory of the student's behaviour and attitude. First, accept it as

simply part of their identity and social group expectations. Then accept some of it,

manage some of it and guide that student to change some of it in order to reach certain

goals. Acknowledge social and economic marginalization as a reality. Do not reinforce

these conditions.

4. Use your professional and interpersonal tools — focusing on relational literacy —

to create, build or strengthen your relationship with that student. This is very simple —

as simple as sharing lunch together.

5. Prioritize learning. Recognize and honour a student's potential. Do not allow

yourself to be convinced that the student has "chosen" to fail. Be critical of statements

such as these. As the educator and the adult it is your job to step in and help students

make informed choices, not ones based on assumptions.

6. Decide and act on targeted interventions, including help from other adults. Do

not engage in power behaviours (or allow colleagues to do so) which intentionally or

unintentionally function to marginalize youth further and punish them because of their

identities. Remember to recognize the influence and power of the dominant culture

group of your school. Do not aid in creating insiders and outsiders. Help marginalized

youth gain access to their full developmental potential and you will successfully engage

the anti-school subculture.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study raised at least three areas which would be suitable for

further research. The first area is the role specific life circumstances play in contributing

to school failure or leaving of marginalized youth. This study was able to examine

social and economic marginalization in a specific subculture, the Anti-School Kids, but

was not able to delve further into family characteristics and gender. The researcher

refers to Lamoureux (2006) who has identified three categories of at-risk students, two

of which are characterized by "difficult life circumstances and lack of a nurturing home

environment…these divisions [serving] to illustrate that hardship in youth is not bound

to culture, ability or socio-economic status." This study focused on those circumstances

as the first influence on marginality, but further research into family-of-origin social

activities, vocational background, ethnic roots, or education foundation would be useful

to give a full picture of the hardship these youth face. This could make the connection

between alternative programming and the alleviation of those hardships.

The second area could include researching actual step-by-step directions for

creating a plan for Anti-School Kids. The researcher recommends the extensive body

of work associated with the Circle of Courage Institute, an arm of Reclaiming Youth

International. This organization offers training and literature which would support

further research in the area of marginalized youth.

Finally, the third area for further research would offer an avenue of exploration

for educators frustrated with the disengagement of marginalized youth. During the

researcher's reading, she came across Dwyer and Wyn's (2001) term "reluctant stayers".

As they explain: "The…insistence on improved school retention rates was likely to have

the effect of forcing potential leavers to stay on at school as 'reluctant stayers' likely to

receive lower levels of encouragement from their teachers, and likely to be regarded as

an added burden to an already stressful job" (2001 p. 149). Many educators can relate to

the reluctance demonstrated by these students. Some of this group, due to certain social

issues they may have, could easily become members of the anti-school subculture,

and further research into how to counter this state would be helpful, particularly if the

Manitoba government raises the legal school leaving age to 18.

Final Words

While you are engaged in your planning, you may need to communicate with

others who do not understand your process. These final words may help to facilitate

discussion with colleagues in point form. The researcher has synthesized the

information gathered from the sources for this thesis into seven final categories to guide

educators who help Anti-School Kids learn, as if we were sitting together in discussion.

Anti-School Kids are survivors. They do what they do, dress how they do, act,

swear, steal, because these are behaviours they have learned just to survive day to

day. If educators can come to terms with these realities, then they will be able to work

successfully with these students. Not only are they successfully surviving — they want

to learn!

Schools should partner with existing social and educational programs dedicated to

youth. These agencies and programs have the freedom to teach and provide assistance

outside the confines of the school structure and teaching profession — and they are successful.

Our job as teachers, as educators or directors of programming, is not to be the mentors. Our role may be to be the ones who provide the connection, the ones who connect each kid with the right mentor, the right teacher, the right program. *We may not be what that marginalized youth needs but we may know someone who will fit the role, or someone who has access to information and people who can help. We can be advocates and in turn teach youths to advocate for themselves. Now that is a life skill worth teaching!*

As an educator, I ask that you consider this question: Is the point of alternative programming— and our aim as educators — to turn Anti-School Kids back into mainstream kids? Is it necessary to transform them into mainstream-looking, speaking, acting, kids in order for us all to feel, and for that kid to feel, successful? Is there a way of working with them that still respects their identity and some of their identity markers? Is the point to get Anti-School Kids to be, act and think like mainstream kids? The answer from the participants is emphatically NO.

Risk your own failure, instead of the student's. Look at your approach and methods and admit when it is not working. Ask a colleague for advice. Or better yet, ask someone you would not normally consult with — a minister from an inner-city outreach program, a soccer coach from a downtown school — expand your knowledge base and change your practice. Step back and admit that your teaching practices are not

working for a certain student or a certain type of student. Seek additional information about that student. Find a better place for that student — allow them the opportunity to succeed.

Find the right fit for that Anti-School Kid and do not give up. As the Bridge Program teacher said, " They are trying to make an effort but because of the structure and the way the school works because it has to, because it has to get through, it's very discouraging for a lot of the kids who just can't function because of their lives at that point in time, don't allow them to work like that. It's not a fit." And the Executive Director of Street Light Inc. reminds us whose responsibility it is to fix this: "Again, it's knowing your audience and hearing your audience. And again, so much of the systems that are failing are trying to fit square pegs in round holes, you gotta make it fit."

Support, promote and engage in targeted interventions for Anti-School Kids. One size does not fit all when attempting to engage these diverse students. That being said, one approach to helping marginalized students will not work for all of these kids. It is the humble hope of this researcher that this study has provided not only thought but actual tools to help educators have the courage to initiate such interventions.

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APPENDIX A

School Division Affiliated Alternative Programs additional information

CONNECT's main beliefs include: Integrity: Accept responsibility for personal attitudes, behaviours and personal growth; Commitment to Learning: A high quality education should be available to all students; Collaboration: Students work towards common understandings and creative solutions. All information about CONNECT sourced and paraphrased from the website: www.wsd1.org/board/policies_pdf/ policy_AD.pdf>.

Expectations of Students: The CONNECT program values courtesy and respect for others prevail. This is demonstrated as follows:

1. Show consideration of others: Students will be expected to respect the personal rights of other participants and Industrial Arts Collegiate staff.

2. The CONNECT reputation matters and so does yours: Assist Industrial Arts Collegiate staff in maintaining a safe and clean learning environment; report any inappropriate behaviour.

3. Come to the building prepared to do your job: Have the necessary tools and be well rested and alert.

4. Do each task to the best of your ability: Listen to and follow directions and ask for help if you need it.

5. Be organized: Arrive on time for classes and appointments and meet your

deadlines.

Program Climate: Rules, Rituals, Routines. CONNECT program late policy:

Students to school late:

• Call ahead if you are going to be absent or arriving late to school.

• Students will be allowed 3 late arrivals within each school term regardless of the

reason

• On the 4th late arrival to school for the term, the student's break privileges will be

suspended for that day.

• On the 5th and 6th late arrival to school for the term, the student's break privileges

will be suspended until a parental meeting is arranged.

• Students will be removed from the LINK program upon any additional late

arrivals to school.

CONNECT program attendance policy.

• Daily attendance in the LINK program is mandatory. Habitual absenteeism will

result in the student being withdrawn from the program.

• In case of illness or any other reasons for a student being absent from school, the

student is responsible to notify a LINK program staff member as soon as possible on the

day of the absence.

• The student's parent/guardian will be contacted on the day of the absence.

CONNECT program code of conduct.

• Students are to show common courtesy and respect to Industrial Arts Collegiate

staff and students.

• Students are to dress appropriately for class and activities.

• Students are not permitted to make or receive phone calls or text messages during class time. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off in the classroom.

• Students are not permitted to bring a personal listening device into the classroom.

• Students who are under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs while on school premises or involved in a school-sponsored activity are to be referred to Industrial Arts Collegiate principals. This behaviour will not be tolerated and students will be disciplined. Discipline will include:

a. notification to parent/guardian

b. suspension for minimum 3 days

c. recommendation for counseling

The next program discussed in Chapter Two is the High School Alternative Classroom (HSAC). This program has not worked for students who are not motivated to achieve, who don't really care if they move forward in high school, or who have too many social/emotional challenges that can't be addressed even with one-on-one attention from the teacher. Students in HSAC are also expected to work independently, both from the teacher and from other students. All information about HSAC sourced and paraphrased from the website: www.wsd1.org/board/policies_pdf/policy_ AD.pdf>.

Some students who are low academic achievers or who have been placed

throughout their schooling (actually failed to meet grade level requirements but are moved forward to the next grade level) simply don't have the study or thinking skills to actually do the work. These are students who benefit from working in groups and actually can't perform solo. HSAC is also is not designed as a special education or resource classroom with modified programming – some of the curriculum might be adapted but it is supposed to be the same as what is delivered in a regular classroom. Also, the teachers are not specially trained.

Non-School Division Affiliated Alternative Programs additional information

All the following information about The Urban Art Institute was sourced and paraphrased from the website <http://www.graffitigallery.ca>. The Urban Art Institute's goals include:

• To use the arts as the foundation of a skill building set which, through a unique mix of innovative programming, can be directed and honed to provide multiple sustainable employment opportunities.

• To assist these youth with building a stronger sense of self-worth and discipline by providing them with the opportunity to explore, develop and display their art in a gallery setting.

• To provide these youth with the option to explore further educational and career opportunities within the cultural/arts community.

• To provide these youth with the opportunity to build stronger links to the

community through regular art open houses and community programs

Programs offered at Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre: Spoken Word/Slam Poetry, Open Art Studio, Fashion Club, and Hip Hop Dance. Programs offered at Norquay Community Centre: Fashion Art; Hip Hop Dance; DJ Club, Rapping Club, Aboriginal Arts & Crafts. Programs offered at GAP at 109 Higgins: After School Art Class, Computer Club, Photography Club, and DJ/MC Class. All clubs and programs are FREE.

We are dedicated to:

• the promotion of youth art as its own genre;

• providing a place where young artists can take creative risks;

• young artists who are working outside institutional expectations;

• promoting the early stage developmental benefits of art programming for our young people;

• neighborhood beautification and community development through public art;

• free art lessons to young people who cannot afford high tuitions and supply costs;

• fostering a sense of creative cooperation and self healing.

Inside the gallery, youth are invited and encouraged to use the interior of our facility as a canvas for their graffiti art. Once inside, they are offered a world of possibilities for their art. Whether it is securing commercial work through participation in our Urban Canvas Program (48 weeks of training in art and commercial applications), providing exhibit space for their art, discovering further skill development/educational

opportunities with the arts and related fields, or just attending our after school

workshops for simple pleasure and recreation, we have been able to assist these youth

with finding "new" uses for their artistic abilities.

We strongly believe that these types of events help nurture and develop self esteem

and confidence in our young, emerging artists. They serve as a continuing opportunity

for them to set goals, meet challenges and receive positive reinforcement from family,

friends and art lovers/critics everywhere. It affords them the opportunity to be shown

that they are special, talented and appreciated; that their hard work and efforts can be

rewarded with public celebration. Nowhere else are these young people afforded the

opportunity and the space, assistance, equipment, etc. that they would need to practice

their art at no cost to them. There is and continues to be a very real and strong need for

this programming and the benefits continue to grow as more and more young people

get a start in their careers with our organization.

The gallery itself is a large space with high ceilings, a mezzanine floor with a

catwalk overlooking the main floor, and a cozy basement; all of which can easily

accommodate all of its many programs and workshops, as well as provide ample

wallspace for art exhibits, a large floor area to accommodate live performance shows

and smaller nook areas for smaller undertakings. The gallery comes complete with

a small computer lab for every day use or for special projects such as music and film

editing. Finally, there is a substantial subbasement that can and has been used for

larger projects such as the building of sets and the filming of music videos and short

films. Any proposal submitted to the gallery for use of the space will be given serious

consideration; however any such proposal MUST adhere to the mission statement and

goals of the organization.

Tours and Outreach. The uniqueness of our community youth art center continues

to generate a great deal of attention locally and nationally. Schools and organizations

throughout Winnipeg continue to hear of our organization through the media, as

well as friends, family and colleagues that have toured the facility previously. The

educational value of the programming we provide these organizations speaks for

itself simply in the increased number of tours facilitated, as well as the number of new

schools and organizations requesting tours and workshops.

Educators in the Manitoba school system continue to use our programs and facilities

to engage and motivate their students and provide them with opportunities that the

conventional school system cannot. Many joint projects between the various schools and

organizations that tour our facility continue to result in successful community initiatives

and events (ie. Manitoba Council for International Cooperation full day workshop, high

school art shows, community beautification (mounting of student murals on the outside

of our building), John Pritchard High School UNESCO Associated Schools Project

Network (ASPnet), 4 day Tadoule Lake (northern Manitoba) workshop, and so much

more).

Community Outreach. Recognizing that illegal graffiti is a serious problem, not

only in our neighbourhood, but throughout the city as a whole, our organization has

been active in developing and implementing strategies to address this issue through community building and area beautification. Illegal graffiti is more a symptom of much broader social problems within the community. We continue to believe that a multi-layered approach is required in this effort as follows:

Re-direction opportunities – an opportunity for young people, who are attracted to this type of illegal behaviour, to express themselves in a controlled and legal environment is, in most cases, all that is required. Youth are invited and encouraged to use the interior of our facility as a canvas for their graffiti art. Once inside, they are offered a world of possibilities for their art. Whether it is securing commercial work through participation in our Urban Canvas Program (48 weeks of training in art and commercial applications), providing exhibit space for their art, discovering further skill development/educational opportunities with the arts and related fields, or just attending our workshops for simple pleasure and recreation, we have been able to assist these youth with finding "new" uses for their artistic abilities.

Illegal graffiti paint-overs – Since June of 2001, our organization has been actively removing illegal graffiti in our neighborhood as a public service to our community. Through previous, current and future planned mural projects and regular paint-overs, we are committed to keeping our immediate area clear of illegal graffiti. In point of fact, our diligence in this area has been so successful as to have reduced the profligacy of illegal tags on the Higgins Avenue stretch for several blocks to either side of our location at Gomez Street. We have submitted an application to the Urban Green Team

to help with summer funding to continue our efforts in this area.

Free community murals – our organization has a long history of anti-graffiti/anti-arson initiatives, from the 175 mini mural project involving 850 youth (ages 4 – 24) in the William Whyte, Lord Selkirk and Point Douglas communities, to the highly successful Marlene Street Residents Association/Manitoba Housing Corporation project in 2002 that saw the completion of 4 separate murals involving suspected graffiti offenders that led to a sharp decline in the incidents of illegal graffiti and the formation of a group of youth that were once attacking their community now beautifying and pledging to watch over and maintain that community.

Community youth justice forums – Since April of 2002, as a community service and in an effort to communicate directly to the young people, who are committing acts of illegal graffiti, the true impact of their crimes our organization has participated in multiple forums involving youth pleading guilty to illegal graffiti crimes and supervised dozens of young offenders performing over 1,000 hours of sentenced community service. Our organization has been the key note speaker at several youth justice functions and has been approached to conduct graffiti workshops at several venues in western Canada. In all cases, we attempt to help these youth discover ways to assist and help their communities instead of attacking it.

Community organizing – our community of Point Douglas was, in the last census, ranked the 4th poorest community in the entire country; the Higgins & Main Street "strip" was voted the worst in Canada by MacLean's Magazine (2000), and our

adjoining community of William Whyte was ranked in the same census as the 3rd

poorest in the country. As mentioned earlier, illegal graffiti is more a symptom and a

sign that a community has been ' . . . neglected beyond neglect' (*Winnipeg Free Press*

2002). For some time, our group has been working hand-in-hand with area residents

and businesses to form a united front in an effort to address the illegal graffiti issue.

We have assisted with the creation of the South Point Douglas Residents and Business

Association and co-authored the "South Point Douglas Safety Audit". It is our

continued hope that the recommendations contained in the audit and the work we are

doing in conjunction with the Association and our generous past funders will see to

fruition the rebirth and renewal of our community.

All the following information about Street Light Inc. was sourced and paraphrased

from the website <http://www.rayinc.ca>**.** The following is a list of additional services

and programming that is currently offered:

• Street Outreach Team, who work right on the street with the most marginalized

citizens of our city. They are usually the initial contact Street Light has with these

impoverished, homeless and sexually exploited youth and adults. Based on the harm

reduction philosophy, the outreach team approaches street youth and adults with the

sole intent to help improve their quality of life. The team provides basic life necessities,

information, resources, and support and is there to provide the youth with what they

need, on their own terms.

• Addictions Counseling: Three times a week "Recovery from Meth" meetings for

any youth ages 29 or younger who are experiencing substance abuse; also one-on-one

counseling and getting youth fast-tracked into treatment.

• Prevention Team: Also offering "Reality Check" which is a program for parents

and families who fear their young child is making bad decisions that could lead to life

on the street. Through the program, the at-risk youth is introduced to a street-youth

who gives him or her a guided tour of the streets and what s/he can expect on the

street.)

• Emergency Youth Services offers: Food bank, clothing bank, computer access for

job search, counseling, toiletries bank and snack program, and bus tickets. They provide

urgent support to youth and young adults feeling the immediate pressures of poverty

and homelessness. It could be food or a warm coat; maybe someone to talk to or if they

just want to go home, EYS is still in the business of getting them there.

• Odd Jobs/Employment Program: focuses on working with partner organizations

in the West Broadway and Osborne areas to provide employment for youth.

All the following information about North Syde Boxing Club was sourced and

paraphrased from the website <http://www.allianceboxing.com>. North Syde Boxing

Club offers an opportunity for underprivileged and disadvantaged inner-city youth to

be exposed to positive life skills while participating in a worthwhile activity.

The programs offer an alternative to today's youth by keeping them off the streets,

and eliminating the many temptations to become involved in drug and gang related

activities. As an alternative, North Syde Boxing Club provides lifetime experiences by

developing positive social, physical and life skills program to the inner city youth of Winnipeg free of charge.

Competitive Boxing Program: Inner city youth are exposed to a structured competitive training program that allows the athletes the opportunity to compete against athletes from Canada and the United States. These athletes follow a structured development-training program as well as a competitive schedule that allows them to fulfill their goals and dreams in the sport of boxing.

Recreational Boxing Program: Inner city youth are offered a program that allows them to experience all the positive aspects of a competitive training program. These youth develop at a rate of their choice and experience all of the benefits of our competitive program but have chosen to enjoy the activity and are not interested in competition.

Nutritional Program: All our athletes are exposed to a nutritionist that educates them to the benefits and importance of eating properly. Our youth are exposed to the value of money while shopping for food. They are educated to pursue the best quality/value for their "dollar". Nutritional snacks are provided to all participants and all of our competitive athletes are prepared for positive performance by having their own nutritional program.

Mentorship Program: In this program, we try to educate our youth by providing them with reading material and workbooks with the goal to improve their scholastic skills. We expose the youth of Alliance Boxing to various community projects that

provide them with the opportunity to give back to the community, like serving meals to the homeless of Winnipeg. We offer career seminars where we bring in various professionals to speak to the youth about job opportunities for the future. Our older youth are partnered with the younger in "Big Brother/Sister" relationship where they are expected to spend quality time together, assisting with homework, going to the movies, or out to lunch in addition to coaching.

Stay in School Program: This attendance encourages full attendance and full time training. The importance of education is the key to this program, and our youth are rewarded for positive school values as well as full training.

Elder/History Program: Many of our urban aboriginals have no idea about their culture, so Alliance Boxing takes the opportunity to expose our athletes to cultural activities involving an elder to educate them on the importance of their history and their identity. We provide these opportunities to the youth of Alliance Boxing throughout the competitive season.

APPENDIX B

Research Instrument Questions

The research instrument will be a semi-structured interview using the following interview questions. Participants will be given the questions before the interview.

The interview questions are framed around the following:

A. Contextual Dimension: personal and then program-specific factors;

B. Structural Dimension: organizational and institutional factors;

C. Professional Dimension: roles and societal factors, specifically institutional expectations;

D. Interpersonal Dimension: individual factors and factors related to our human capacity.

A. Contextual Dimension

1. What is your story? How did you end up here, in this role, doing what you do? Can you provide me with some of your personal and professional background?

2. Can you introduce me to the types of youth you serve here, without being too specific or naming names — in terms of the circumstances that brought them to your program? How did being part of the program change their behaviour or circumstances?

3. What are some specific life skills that youth learn here? How have marginalized youth responded to what your organization has had to offer them? What do you do with that feedback?

4. What do you as a teacher/mentor/guardian have to bargain with in your program, or do you need to bargain at all with your kids? Are there situations where you have

to force compliance? What are some of the forms that their defiance takes? Are there situations where someone is asked to leave the program/premises? Under what conditions can s/he return?

5. How important is being on time here? Or, how important is the amount of time spent here, learning? How do you handle the mechanics of attendance in your program?

6. If someone you are trying to help through your program won't or can't stay, what happens to him/her? Where would someone go from here? What would happen to them?

B. Structural Dimension

7. In your own words, what is the mission or *raison d'etre* of your organization? What do you think is the most important thing you do here?

8. Can you name some specific structural differences between your organization and a regular high school that might make it easier for marginalized students to be here?

9. In your opinion, what experiences did your kids have in mainstream school that contributed to their inability to continue and possibly find success there? On the other hand, are there specific experiences you know of that helped them find their way to an alternative program such as yours? If you could change one thing about the way schools operate, what would it be?

C. Professional Dimension

10. Can you explain how you see your role and its effect on programming? What are some markers of progress with your students?

11. What is your opinion of some of the school-based alternative programs that are designed to help marginalized youth? Can you identify some strengths? Challenges?

12. Can you describe how you react to youth who demonstrate anti-social behaviour,

language, lifestyle choices, dress and hygiene, those sorts of markers of marginalization that may require "fixing" or changing? Do you make any demands on your kids in terms of their outward identity; do they have to change who they are to succeed here?

D. Interpersonal Dimension

13. Can you describe your relationship to these students in terms of being a teacher, a mentor, a guardian? What is the difference between you and the students' parents?

14. Which personal experiences or which parts of your past and present personal life do you draw from to develop your interpersonal relationships with your students?

15. How do non-teachers like yourself interact differently with students than teachers? Are there some aspects to your relationship that you could pinpoint as being "touchstones" of success with marginalized youth?

APPENDIX C

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Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

December 2009

To: • Head Coach/Program Director of North Syde Boxing Club
    • A Community Liaison Officer, Street Light Inc.
    • The Program Director of Urban Art Institute
    • The Principal of Industrial Arts Collegiate, to pass on to the following teachers:
        • Bridge Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate
        • CONNECT Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate
        • SAFE and HSAC Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate

Research Project Title:
    Identity, Associations, Guardians: An Analysis of Alternative Programs for
Marginalized Youth

Researcher: Kristine Dubois-Vandale

I am a teacher at Tec Voc High School, where I have been employed for 7 years. I am presently working on writing my thesis, as part of the requirements for a Masters Degree in Education at the University of Manitoba. At the end of my coursework in April 2008, I designed a study which brings together both my academic and professional interests in the social foundations of education, particularly in the structural and social-psychological aspects of working with marginalized youth. The purpose of this research project is to examine the relational aspects of alternative education programs which serve the marginalized population, as well as the anti-school subculture, who have not been successful in a regular provincial high school. The resulting data may reveal practical applications from those alternative programs that can be used in the traditional high school classrooms to accommodate and graduate these students.

The research instruments are designed to help sort out what works in these particular environments to help youth learn; some of which may be transferable to help marginalized youth within mainstream institutions. I have designed this study to analyze the structural, professional, and interpersonal dimensions of your program, and therefore used these categories to frame the questions. The questions concern the content and mechanics of your program, your personal and professional approach to teaching, the differences between your program and mainstream programming and the heart of it all — the relationship between you and the kids. You will receive a copy of the questions prior to the interview.

I am writing to you at this time to request your help in gathering data. You will not be identified in any printed form. I will be using pseudonyms for your name and organization, even in the transcriptions. I ask that you contact me directly, through e-mail or phone, to confirm your participation in this study. My contact information is at the end of this letter. The following are a few more details about the planned study. I look forward to hearing from you.

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

December 2009

To:
- Head Coach/Program Director of North Syde Boxing Club
- A Community Liaison Officer, Street Light Inc.
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  - SAFE and HSAC Program Teacher, Industrial Arts Collegiate

Research Project Title:
Identity, Associations, Guardians: An Analysis of Alternative Programs for Marginalized Youth

Researcher: Kristine Dubois-Vandale

You will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 1 1/2 hours. Of course, any part of your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty by informing me verbally and none of your data will be used. I will have a suggestion for a location of the interview which is conducive to audio taping, but I will be open to a location chosen for your convenience. During these interviews, I will be using a laptop computer with recording software. If the interview becomes lengthy, I will gladly meet you for a continuation. My faculty advisor will be seeing the transcribed notes as they will be used to write Chapter 4 and 5 of my thesis. I am the only person to listen to the audio files and I will be the sole transcriptionist. The audio files will be stored on a memory stick in a safety deposit box. All transcripts and audio files will be destroyed after publication of the thesis and the conferring of the M. Ed. after October 2010. The researcher will not be discussing the content of the interviews with anyone. The data collected will be used only to fulfill the requirements of the thesis.

This should give you the basic idea of what the study entails and what your role will be. I could provide further details if you wish. The researcher's and the advisor's contact information is listed below.

Kristine Dubois-Vandale   OR   Dr. David Mandzuk
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APPENDIX D

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Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants

Research Project Title: Identities, Associations, Guardians: An Analysis of
    Alternative Programs for Marginalized Youth

Researcher: Kristine Dubois-Vandale

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a teacher at Tec Voc High School, where I have been employed for 7 years. I am presently working on writing my thesis, as part of the requirements for a Masters Degree in Education at the University of Manitoba. At the end of my coursework in April 2008, I designed a study which brings together both my academic and professional interests in the social foundations of education, particularly in the structural and social-psychological aspects of working with marginalized youth. The purpose of this research project is to examine the relational aspects of alternative education programs which serve the marginalized population, as well as the anti-school subculture, who have not been successful in a regular provincial high school. The resulting data may reveal practical applications from those alternative programs that can be used in the traditional high school classrooms to accommodate and graduate these students.

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You will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 1 1/2 hours. Of course, any part of your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. I will have a suggestion for a location of the interview which is conducive to audio taping, but I will be open to a location chosen for your convenience. During these interviews, I will be using a laptop computer with recording software.

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Feedback regarding the results of this project can be provided to the subjects once the transcriptions have been generated. Please check the box below if you would like a summary of the findings prior to publication of the thesis. Remuneration is not offered for participation in the study. The researcher's and the advisor's contact information is listed below.

Kristine Dubois-Vandale   OR   Dr. David Mandzuk
40 Arbuthnot Street   Associate Dean
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Cell: 204-771-6718   University of Manitoba
Work: 204-786-1401 Ext. 153   (204) 474-9015
kadubois@shaw.ca   assocdeanug_educ@umanitoba.ca

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be a informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

c Send me a written summary of your findings prior to publication of your thesis.
Contact information: _____

This research has been approved by the Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this study you may contact any of the above-named persons or the chair of ENREB at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date