Constructing Success:
The Conundrum of Evaluating a Community-Based Program
for Street-Involved Youth

by

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ABSTRACT

Community-based arts programs (CBAPs) for street-involved youth in Canada are notoriously vulnerable to funding cuts. This vulnerability can be traced to the existing gulf between the way government funders like Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), CBAPs like Kensington Youth Theatre and Employments Skills (KYTES), construct and measure success. Currently, youth perspectives are conspicuously missing from discussions about the impacts of these programs. To gain a fuller understanding of the current dilemmas CBAPs face, this thesis asks: 1) How do stakeholders including youth, KYTES, and HRSDC construct success? and, 2) What are the implications of these findings for program evaluation?

This thesis suggests that KYTES and HRSDC often use limited constructions and measures of success. It calls for structural and conceptual shifts in evaluative criteria and practices and the implementation of Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE), an alternative evaluative strategy, to address current dilemmas surrounding program development and evaluation.
DEDICATION

To my KYTES family

for all they have taught me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and encouragement of my committee, Dr. Sharon Bailin and Dr. Michael Ling, the help of Lyndsay Moffatt, and the support of my friends and family.
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Since I've been paying attention, it's become incredibly obvious how few meaningful questions people ask each other. I recommend that people try a little harder. How much do you really know about the people who you encounter on a daily basis? Try asking these people what they really care about. Show them that you are truly interested. Perhaps it will rub off on them, and they will ask you a question back. Whole complex conversations might ensue. You'll learn things from each other, trust and honesty could develop - the world might become a better place.

Harrell Fletcher

"Towards a Tender Society of Thoughtful Questions and Answers" (2002)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

From 1995 to 2000, I worked as a theatre director at a community-based arts program for street-involved youth called Kensington Youth Theatre and Employment Skills (KYTES). While working at KYTES, I became aware of a gulf that exists between the way government funding agencies like Human Resources and Development Canada (HRSDC) and community-based programs for street-involved youth like KYTES construct success for the programs and the youth participants. While government funding agencies often base their support for community-based arts programs on statistics concerning how many youth are either fully employed or in school full-time at the end of their involvement with a particular program, community-based arts programs are more likely to measure success through more subjective or qualitative means. Community-based arts programs generally seek feedback from participants about their experiences, but this feedback is often gathered in an ad hoc manner for internal purposes only, or with the end of creating sound bites for funders. While recent research suggests an understanding of participants’ constructions of themselves and their success may be essential to the creation of effective programs for street-involved youth, for numerous reasons thorough evaluation is given fairly short shrift in community-based arts programs.

To gain a fuller understanding of how community-based arts programs like KYTES can be evaluated in a way that attends to the needs of the stakeholders --
participants, funders, and program leaders – and provide essential data for program development, this study asks: 1) How is success constructed by these three stakeholders? And 2) what are the implications for program evaluation? By examining how each stakeholder constructs success for the programs and the youth participants, this study attempts to shed light on some of the existing tensions that continue to make programs vulnerable to funding cuts. Ultimately, the objective of this study is to present an alternative to the current evaluative dilemma that serves the needs of the stakeholders by making community-based arts programs more effective.

The Conundrum

Under the present circumstances, the roads leading from the street direct youth to publicly funded training programs whose objectives are shaped by government policies that prioritize employment-related outcomes. Specifically, HRSDC programs such as KYTES rely on federal funding to provide the comprehensive programming that street-involved youth require to help them transition from street-involvement. Like all of HRSDC’s programs, community-based arts programs for street-involved youth are expected to evaluate whether they are successful based on the number of youth who are employed at the end of the program. This study suggests that HRSDC’s employment-related, outcome-oriented evaluative measures are problematic for a number of reasons, most notably because they fail to consider the unique circumstances, experiences and perspectives of street-involved youth. As a consequence, there is a disconnect between the HRSDC’s approach to assessing programs for street-involved youth and the ability of programs and youth to deliver the kinds of outcomes the HRSDC expects. Therefore,
community-based programs are often in jeopardy of losing their primary source of funding. However, because it appears that programs like KYTES are effective in helping youth to transition from street-involvement, this situation has serious implications not only for the livelihood of these programs and the ability of youth to access them, but also for government agencies like HRSDC concerned with improving the circumstances of disadvantaged and street-involved youth.

The Value of Arts-based Programs

In the past thirty years a vast body of literature has emerged in North America, Britain, and Australia based on studies of both in- and out-of-school settings, that demonstrate the value of arts engagement in facilitating the development of a range of skills, competencies, and experiences that are valuable to young people.

In a recent three-year, cross-Canada study on the impact of the Ontario Conservatory of Music’s “Learning Through the Arts” (LTTA) program, Upitis and Smithrim (2002) found that, while some benefits of in-school arts programs were measurable, like improvements in students’ overall academic achievement, others were more ephemeral, “but perhaps even more important in the long term as students’ and teachers’ lives were transformed through the arts” (p.2). Among the benefits that have been identified by researchers in the case of in-school arts education are increases in the quality of students’ engagement in learning, enhanced imaginative capabilities, improvements in young peoples’ ability to express themselves in a variety of ways, and heightened social skills (Catteral, 2002; Catteral, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Eisner, 1994; Greene, 1995; Howard, 1992; Upitis & Smithrim, 2002).
In the case of after-school and out-of-school programs which draw a large number of low-income and at-risk youth participants, studies have found the impacts of arts engagement to be comparable to in-school arts programming. In "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning" (1999), an acclaimed compilation of studies published by the American Arts Education Partnership, researchers found that arts programming is an effective and appealing way to engage at-risk youth in developing a range of skills and competencies that they would not necessarily develop in school. Similarly, an in-depth Canadian research project conducted by McGill University's School of Social Work that examined the benefits of after-school arts programming for youth in low-income communities, found that "structured, cumulative and high-quality arts programming has a positive impact on children's participation, arts skills development, task completion, and pro-social skills" (Wright, John, Offord, & Rowe, 2004). Based on this evidence, the McGill researchers strongly advocate that after-school arts programs be made more widely accessible to young people in poorer, under-served communities.

The research contributions of Shirley Brice Heath in the field of arts-based programs for at-risk youth are of particular relevance to this inquiry. Her decade-long research project, which ran from 1987 to 1998 in 124 organizations for at-risk youth in the U.S., asked "what happens in non-school youth organizations judged by local youth living in low-income neighbourhoods as highly desirable places to spend their time?" (Brice Heath, Soep, & Roach, 1998). Brice Heath and her research team discovered that collaborative arts-based programs, in particular, provide challenging and engaging contexts for at-risk youth to develop a wide range of skills, competencies, experience,
and knowledge associated with performing new roles as practicing artists. Among the qualities the youth developed through their involvement in the arts were, "strength of perception, ability to coordinate work towards production and performance and commitment to understanding contemporary circumstances while creating new ways of seeing" (Brice Heath, Soep and Roach, 1998, p.4). According to Brice Heath, community-based arts programs offer important learning "ecologies" that provide youth with opportunities to develop in ways that surpass what is being taught in the "back-to-basics" curricula in schools. Hence, these programs were found to be beneficial not only to youth living in low income communities but also as a means to revitalize and enrich the communities where the programs were located (Brice Heath, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Brice Heath & Roach, 1999; Brice Heath, Soep, & Roach, 1998).

As these studies reveal, the intrinsic and instrumental value of in- and out-of-school arts programming is becoming well documented and more widely accepted among educators, arts programmers, and social service providers. In particular, recent research demonstrates that there are strong arguments to be made in favour of providing arts-based programs to youth who lack access to these opportunities. Specifically, community-based arts programs appear to be among the few existing settings where marginalized youth are offered opportunities to value their own perspectives and increase their sense of agency while accumulating valuable skills, knowledge, and experience (Brice Heath, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Brice Heath & Roach, 1999; Brice Heath et al., 1998; Fiske, 1999; Greene, 1995; Simon, 1992; Williams, 2001; Willis, 1990).
Community-based Arts Programs for Street-Involved Youth

The growing presence of young people among the homeless population in Canada’s urban centres has spurred the emergence of community-based programs intended to help severely disadvantaged youth transition from the streets, and high-risk behaviours associated with street-involvement, to more stable and healthy situations. Among these responses are a number of programs that use arts-based programming, often as a part of a comprehensive program including counselling and “pre-employment training” (including resume writing, life-skills workshops, and mentorships) to assist them in making their transition.

Since 1995 I have been an artist and educator in several community-based arts programs for street-involved and “at-risk” youth in Toronto and Vancouver. These programs, regardless of the specific artistic disciplines they employ, have combined arts education with collaborative creation and final presentations of the participants’ work. Their goals are also quite similar: to expand the participants’ knowledge, skills, and experience in a range of artistic practices, and provide them with ‘tools’ and support networks to expand their options and increase their chances of transitioning from the negative consequences of street dependency and entrenchment, to find constructive opportunities and fulfilling roles within their communities. Well-known examples of urban community-based arts programs in Canada include KYTES, which worked with street-involved youth in Toronto to develop collaboratively created plays over the course of four months, SKETCH, a cross-disciplinary arts studio in Toronto that offers workshops as well as open studio access to street-involved youth, and Projections, a film
and video mentorship program for street-involved youth in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

Recently, research findings that advocate for arts-based programming have been used by community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, like KYTES, SKETCH, and Projections, to gain federal support for their continuation; however, these arguments have not had a significant impact on the ability of these programs to access funding from the federal government. Nor has the mounting evidence pointing to the benefits of community-based arts programs for at-risk and street-involved youth reduced the existing tensions between the funders and the programs about the value of community-based arts programs.

Human Resources and Development Canada (HRSDC)

In Canada community-based arts programs for street-involved youth are funded through a combination of private and public sources. Many of these programs have relied on federal funding through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) to provide core funding and thereby ensure their long-term sustainability. However, with recent changes in government policy, funding to these programs has been severely reduced.

HRSDC is responsible for national employment and training programs, as well as the management of homelessness, labour issues and the Canada Student Loans Program. According to the current criteria used by HRSDC, the success of programs like KYTES is measured by employment-related outcomes alone. Specifically, HRSDC’s expectations
are that graduates of programs like KYTES are either employed or, to a lesser extent, attending school full-time by the end of the program.

From 1983 to 2003, KYTES, located in the Kensington Market area of downtown Toronto, weathered a precarious financial situation. In 2003, the KYTES program closed due to a lack of funding. Early in the funding relationship between HRSDC and KYTES it became clear to the program leaders that it was unrealistic to expect most street-involved youth to be employed or in school full-time at the end of the program when, for many of them, KYTES was a first step off the streets and into a formal environment besides shelters, jail, or treatment centres. KYTES program leaders came to understand through experience that transitioning street-involved youth need time to address the effects of homelessness and the many personal barriers they face including drug addiction and emotional issues before they would be ‘job-ready.’

By HRSDC’s standards, the KYTES program was considered to be ineffective because it was unable to meet their expectations. In effect, the criteria HRSDC uses to evaluate programs like KYTES constructs these programs and, by implication, the youth participants, as failures. In reflecting on HRSDC policy and the impact of KYTES on youth participants, it seemed clear that the evaluative measures employed by HRSDC are limited and inappropriate for both community-based arts programs and street-involved youth.

**Street-Involved Youth**

In this study the term ‘street-involved’ is used to refer to the kind of youth who attend programs like KYTES, SKETCH, and Projections in order to more fully capture
their life circumstances. Besides being out-of-school and unemployed, these youth are often homeless - meaning they live outdoors, in temporary or unstable housing conditions - and derive their emotional and economic livelihood from street-based activities and culture. The circumstances that cause young people to leave home and become street-involved are numerous and complex, however there are a few common experiences that they appear to share. Research has found that the majority of young people who are street-involved come from impoverished backgrounds, troubled family situations, shared histories of abuse and transience, a reliance on drugs and/or alcohol, depression and other emotional challenges; have difficulty acquiring housing and welfare, experience isolation arising from a lack of family and extended relationship support, and suffer various health conditions caused by stress and a lack of nutrition. Other circumstances that have been found to cause young people to leave home by choice or force include issues of addiction, homophobia, racism and cultural alienation from immigrant families (Gaetz, 1994; Hamilton, 1999; Mayers, 2001; Webber, 1991).

Once they are on the street there are a range of experiences and perspectives connected to class, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexuality and (sub)cultural practices, that shape how they identify themselves in the context of urban street-involved culture(s) and dominant cultural values (Gaetz, 1994; Hamilton, 1999; Hebdige, 1988; Mayers, 2001; Webber, 1991). In an extensive study of street-involved youth in several urban centres in Canada, Mayers (2001) found that the experience of being homeless causes many youth to develop values, attitudes, and behaviours that are counter to, and critical of, dominant cultural values. According to Mayers, the 'outsider' position that most street-involved youth inhabit is a consequence of the influence they have on each other and the way they
are regarded and treated in Canadian cities. Hence, how street-involved youth are situated within our society and within street culture itself affects how they choose to participate in - or resist - dominant cultural constructions of success.

**The Local Context: 1995-2000**

During the time I was at KYTES, from 1995 to 2000, the program and its participants underwent drastic adjustments as a result of shifting social policies and funding priorities that took place on all levels of government. In 1997, HRSDC’s funding freeze resulted in the loss of a majority of KYTES’ budget and meant that the program teetered on the brink of closing, while at the same time, street-involved youth in Toronto lost a host of other services, including access to welfare and their street-based economy of panhandling and squeegeying. During these years both the KYTES program and its participants operated in constant ‘crisis mode’ due to financial instability and other related issues.

In 1995, the ‘Common Sense Revolution’ of the newly elected provincial Conservative government ushered in years of tax cuts and severe reductions in spending on welfare, social services, affordable housing, healthcare, and education. Within weeks of assuming office, the government cut welfare benefits by 21.6%, increased restrictions on eligibility for social assistance, reduced funding to community services, cancelled plans to construct affordable housing, and transferred financial responsibility for social housing to the municipalities (Herd, 2002). During this period, the provincial government also forced amalgamation on Metropolitan Toronto and the suburbs, causing a prolonged gap in service delivery amongst municipal departments.
In the mid-1990s in Toronto, the level of poverty increased among marginalized populations as a consequence of the changes brought about by the ‘Common-Sense Revolution,’ a 10 percent unemployment rate, and a lack of affordable housing (Conway, 2004). Consequently, the number of homeless people in the downtown area became a serious issue that needed to be addressed. In 1998 the newly elected Mayor of Toronto promised to make the homeless situation in the city a priority. Shortly afterwards he instituted an urban renewal strategy, similar to Mayor Guliani’s in New York City, to attract development to the downtown area. For street-involved youth, the urban renewal program amounted to higher housing costs and the criminalization of street-based activities associated with homelessness, including panhandling and squeegeying which were among their primary sources of income (Hamilton, 1999; Mosenbratten, 1998). From 1995 to 2000, cuts to welfare and social services, anti-squeegeying and panhandling legislation and a moratorium on social housing development restricted access to the very supports that street-involved youth (KYTES participants among them), depended on to transition from living on the streets.

Evaluating Community-based Arts Programs

How effective are community-based arts programs in helping street-involved youth? The question of how to best assess and improve these programs is an intriguing one given that, 1) the Canadian federal government has discovered that it is difficult to evaluate these programs based on statistical measures of short-term employment-related impacts, due to the personal and socio-economic barriers disadvantaged youth face finding and keeping jobs, 2) there are few, if any, examples in the literature on program
evaluations that include pre- and post- program information on the youth and, 3) the differences between the funders’ and program leaders’ constructions of success mean there is a lack of constructive dialogue about the kinds of impacts that are desirable and possible, in working with street-involved youth in short-term programs like KYTES.

In the struggle between the federal government and community-based arts programs to determine what are feasible and effective goals for arts-based programs, the voices of participants have been conspicuously under-represented. This study points to the limitations of the current evaluations of these programs and suggests that, by attending to the perspectives of youth, we gain a fuller picture of how programs can more effectively contribute to their development. Involving youth participants in program development and evaluation may actually help to bridge the gulf between how programs and funders construct success, given that both are attempting to “help” street-involved youth.

The existing disparity between how government funders such as HRSDC, community-based arts programs such as KYTES, and youth participants construct and measure success raises questions about how to negotiate this chasm and find ways to make programs more effective, responsive, and accountable to funders and participants. What is at stake is the continuation of programming that may not meet HRSDC’s expectations, but may be extremely successful according to the youth participants and program leaders. The vulnerability of programs to ever-changing funding priorities and a highly competitive struggle among programs for meagre funds means that initiatives for street-involved youth come and go at an alarming rate. In order to assess the effects of these programs on the lives of street-involved youth it is essential that they survive long
enough to study their impact. This thesis is an exploration of the stakeholders' different constructions of success as a way to gain a fuller understanding of how best to assess community-based arts programs for street-involved youth. In doing so, it attempts to shed light on current limitations in the evaluative criteria and processes of both funding bodies and community-based arts programs, while proposing an alternative method for evaluation, Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE).

In reviewing the literature on evaluations of community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, I found research and documentation on the impact of programs on the participants to be woefully lacking. It appears that neither funders nor programs have made significant efforts to document the pre- and post-program circumstances of participants. The anecdotal information and quantitative reports that I was able to locate are specific to after-school programs for at-risk youth and as such, tell only part of the story.

Map of the Thesis

In the following chapter I present the conceptual framework for this study including discourse analysis, socio-cultural examinations of identity and agency, Vygotsky's social-cultural theory of learning and development, the field of youth development, and Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE). In the third chapter, I outline the methods of data collection that were used in this study. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters consecutively, I examine how the KYTES program, HRSDC, and former KYTES participants construct success. In Chapter 7, I discuss the findings from the stakeholders' constructions of success. In Chapter 8, I explore some of the possible
implications of these findings in the evaluation of community-based arts programs, and consider what kind of future action this data and its analysis suggest.
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that has informed this study is presented in three sections: The Language of Success which looks at the relationship between language, the construction of success, and support for community-based arts programs for street-involved youth; Troubling Notions of Success which explores the idea that values are contextual and that assessments of success are based on specific values arising from specific contexts, and; Developing Resources for Success which explores ways that youth can be involved in program development and evaluation.

The Language of Success

This study uses discourse analysis as a tool of inquiry in an effort to extract a degree of understanding about the way “success” is constructed, experienced, and lived by the three stakeholders, namely HRSDC, KYTES and youth participants. How the stakeholders construct “success,” as well as the capacity of programs like KYTES to assist youth in achieving “success,” is a primary concern of this study. Given that success has emerged as a contentious term in the course of this research, with associations and dynamics that have a significant impact on the livelihood of community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, discourse analysis provides a frame for understanding how “language-in-use” reflects different ways of viewing and living in the world.
M. M. Bakhtin (1981), the Soviet critical theorist and semiotician, theorized extensively about language as a diverging, contesting, dialoguing set of discourses that are ideological and lived perspectives on the world (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Bakhtin’s theory of language suggests that even though a word like “success” is common among the stakeholders in this study, it has multiple and simultaneous meanings, associated values and lived perspectives. Bakhtin (1981) refers to this phenomena as heteroglossia and explains that

all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such that they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically (p. 291-292).

From this view, we can acknowledge that the language of “success” is constructed, experienced, and lived in a variety of ways by the stakeholder groups. Using heteroglossia as a point of reference we can also recognize that these constructions co-exist in association with one another although not necessarily in compatible ways. In fact, as this study demonstrates, there are power dynamics at play and struggles between the differing constructions of success that have implications for the ability of the less powerful stakeholders – the programs and youth - to express their values fully in society. According to Holland et al (1998), Bakhtin was extremely aware of the lack of neutrality within language believing it to be expressive of world views and values that are steeped in power and stratification. Giroux (1992) after Bakhtin, states that language is

always implicated in power relationships expressed, in part, through...struggles over how established institutions...support, and
legitim[ize] particular ways of life that characterize a society at a given time in history (p. 203-204).

This point is particularly relevant to this study because it draws attention to the relationship between language, power, and the distribution of capital as well as other goods. Gee (1999) and Fairclough (1989) suggest that “language-in-use” is complicit in the distribution of “social goods” or what a group of people believe to be a “source of power, status, or worth.” Following Gee (1999), each person’s perspective on the world involves taking a position on what is “normal” or “abnormal,” “right” or “wrong,” “what people like us do” or “what people like us don’t do,” and influences how we believe social goods should be distributed. Being “recognized” as legitimate involves, among other things, acting, thinking, and valuing in the “appropriate way.” What is considered to be on or off the grid of acceptability has ramifications for the less powerful. In the case of community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, each stakeholder group may have its own distinct perception of what constitutes “success” and what is “acceptable” or “possible” at any given time, however their perceptions are not given equal consideration in terms of the evaluation and funding of programs. For example, government institutions like HRSDC have their perceptions of what constitutes “success” and legitimate outcomes for programs like KYTES. They also have the power to decide what to fund, and therefore the ability to more readily reproduce their particular ideas about what constitutes “success.”

This study seeks to understand the perspectives of the stakeholders deeply and critically, by attending to the way they use spoken and written language to “foreground” and “background” information. According to Gee (1999), language can be seen as a
"project" - a very real social activity - that is an integral part of the process of creating, sustaining, and transforming different worlds. As this study demonstrates, there are three worlds or discourses at play amongst the stakeholder groups with distinct implications on the language they use, and the kinds of things they value in life. According to Gee (1999) these worlds are continuously built and rebuilt through language, in combination with our actions, interactions, ways of seeing, believing, valuing, feeling, and so forth. For the purposes of this study "success" is not just a word but part of a world, of meaning that each stakeholder group interprets differently and attempts to reproduce, sustain, or interpret in their own way. "Situated meaning" is the term Gee (1999) uses to refer to the way the substance of words changes and adapts to specific contexts of use. Applying this lens, this study looks at how situated meanings of success play out in the evaluative field.

Troubling Notions of Success

This section explores and questions the way success is currently constructed by dominant culture to maintain a hegemonic relationship between success and employment. From this perspective, it is assumed that everyone within our culture constructs success similarly and has fairly equal opportunities to achieve success along these lines. In terms of this study however, it appears that street-involved youth do not have easy or equal access to dominant cultural constructions of success, nor do they necessarily strive to attain success as it is understood by dominant culture while participating in programs like KYTES.

Socio-cultural perspectives of identity and agency suggest that individuals develop their identities, values and the strategies they use to negotiate their lives, through
a complex interplay of forces within their social and cultural context (Holland et al., 1998; Moss, Pullin, Gee, & Haertel, 2005). Critical socio-cultural examinations of identity and agency are important to this study in that they attempt to place local socio-cultural contexts in larger political and historical contexts. The advantage of using critical approaches in this study has to do with the way historical, social, cultural and material influences can be viewed as shaping people over the course of their lives. And since this study, in part, discusses the issues street-involved youth face coming from often difficult and disadvantaged backgrounds, while attempting to make changes in their lives, it is helpful to better understand how their unique circumstances affect the choices that are available to them.

In Holland, et al. (1998) the authors describe the self-understandings that form our identities as follows: “people tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are” (p.3). Working with street-involved youth, I have come to recognize the significant role identity plays in both holding young people back and in giving them the fortitude to make their way in very difficult circumstances. I have often witnessed this push-pull dynamic in these young people as they struggled to make changes in their lives while in the KYTES program. The complicated and challenging task of navigating their street-involved identities in a culture that claims people “can be anything they want to be if they try” is one that requires attention, given that this study looks at various constructions of success, and recognizes that success is not a universally understood or accessible value in our society.
In contrast to a socio-cultural perspective of identity, a "universalist" perspective of the self regards all people as being constituted of more or less the same ingredients (structure) and predispositions (psychology). From this perspective, individuals are considered to have similar life chances regardless of their backgrounds, whereas Moss et al. (2005) suggest that

[Though an overemphasis on social constraints leaves little room for human agency, many accounts make the opposite error: they neglect the cultural and social contexts that inform the "playing field" to which human action is directed and by which it is shaped (p.278).]

From a universalist perspective, the role of culture or context is subordinate to the properties of the "essential self" that reside below the thin overlay of cultural expression. In this view, all people are cut from the same cloth though the patterns in the fabric may vary. The essential self is therefore understood to be a stable and durable entity that proceeds through life unmarked by changes in social and material conditions (Holland et al., 1998). For instance, all young people in our culture would be considered to share similar life chances and aspire to fairly similar markers of success.

Critical socio-cultural theory provides a conceptual framework to question the taken-for-granted or 'common-sense' notions of success that exist in our society, by offering insight into the way dominant culture is structured to prevent disadvantaged youth from having access to certain "social goods." This perspective suggests that dominant culture views, treat, and maintain street-involved youth as marginalized, as a consequence of their socio-economic backgrounds, their lack of education and their resistance to dominant constructions of success.
Specifically, Bourdieu (1997) and Willis (1977) explored how the cultural dynamics of exclusion, marginalization, and resistance play out in schools. In his research, Bourdieu found that schools reproduce inequality by privileging the cultural capital—knowledge, skills, language, dispositions, and mannerisms—of the dominant classes and devaluing those of less powerful classes (Bourdieu, 1997; Janelle Dance, 2002). After Bourdieu, Carrington and Luke (1997) suggest that, in the complex web of social and cultural relations that structure society, disadvantaged youth are marginalized not only because they lack sufficient forms of cultural capital to succeed in institutional spaces, but also because their “habitus” imbues them from birth with “distinctive, class, culture-based and engendered ways of “seeing,” “being,” “occupying space,” and “participating in history”” (p. 101). In this view, the role of cultural capital and habitus in keeping disadvantaged youth from participating fully in society reproduces their marginality and maintains the homogenous make-up of dominant culture. Renshaw (2002) suggests that practices that exclude and marginalize “those who do not fit into the dominant philosophy and practices of the community” require them “to leave, remain on the margins, or perhaps resist in various ways” (p.16). From this perspective, resistance may be regarded as a way disadvantaged youth are able to exercise a degree of personal agency.

Willis’s study (1977) specifically examines young working class students’ resistance to dominant constructions of success in schools. He found that working-class youth actively reproduce their marginal status by refusing to participate in their school’s ideology of success. Rather than trying to succeed, working class youth were found to subvert teacher and administrative authority and engage in counter-cultural activities that
undermined their ability to succeed in prescribed ways. Their opposition to conformist views of school were also transposed to their ideas about jobs and the possibilities that the world of work held for them (Willis, 1977, 1990). In keeping with Willis (1977, 1990) and Giroux (1999) this study suggests that youth whose expectations and stakes in society have been diminished by negative experiences in school and grim employment prospects, may resist participating in institutionalized environments that reinforce these dominant cultural narratives.

From a critical socio-cultural perspective the ‘socially constructed self’ refers to the position individuals occupy within society relative to dominant discourses, in combination with the categories they participate in reproducing, through an array of practices including language, values, behaviour, and physical artifacts (Holland et al., 1998). Extrapolating from Willis (1977, 1990) and Holland (1998) street-involved youth would likewise tend to reproduce their socially constructed, counter-cultural status through non-conformity to mainstream constructions of success, and by refusing to participate in institutions and programs that promote this view.

Similarly, in Mayers’ (2001) study of street-involved youth in Canada, she found that, by virtue of their marginality, many of these youth tend to develop values and beliefs that are counter to and critical of dominant cultural values. This, she found, occurs through street-involved youth associating with each other and sharing similar values as a result of the way they are treated in the public domain. As well, by not aspiring to or achieving dominant forms of success in their lives, they are apt to construct themselves as failures and become further entrenched in their marginal identities. According to Mayers, education and training programs that are interested in reaching
street-involved youth and helping them transition from the street to participate in society in productive ways, need to tailor their principles and practices to address their unique circumstances, experiences, and perspectives (Mayers, 2001).

Developing Resources for Success

Drawing on the developmental framework of Lev Vygotsky, the field of ‘youth development,’ and the methodology of Youth Participatory Evaluation, this section examines the potential for creating contexts or “zones of proximal development” (known as zpds) which give youth active and expanded roles to play in policy and program development, delivery, and evaluation.

Lev Vygotsky and Zones of Proximal Development (zpds)

Vygotsky used a developmental framework to theorize about the activity of learning and development as a social-cultural activity that people engage in together. According to Vygotsky, developmental learning occurs when people come together to construct “zones” wherein they perform who they are and who they are becoming. “Zones of proximal development” (zpds) is the term he used to describe the space between who people are and who they are becoming; that allows them to become by challenging them to go beyond themselves; to do things they do not yet know how to do. Through his findings, Vygotsky discovered that the essence of human growth is rooted in the capacity of people to do things in advance of themselves (Newman & Holzman, 2002; Sabo, 2003a; Vygotsky, 1978). Children learn and develop, he said, “by performing a head taller than they are” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). Vygotsky explained this phenomena by describing the process whereby babies transform from babblers to
speakers by performing as if they are able to speak with their caregivers. In this way, babies perform as speakers ("a head taller") in conversations (zpd) that are created between themselves and their caregivers in the process of becoming speakers (Newman & Holzman, 1997; Sabo, 2003a).

Vygotsky’s zpd and the potential they hold for youth development may be useful tools in providing direction in the conundrum of evaluating community-based arts programs for street-involved youth. Although it is the intention of community-based arts programs to create environments where youth are able to develop or perform "a head taller," one of the basic challenges for programs seems to arise out of the stakeholders’ differing perspectives about what constitutes success. Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development suggests that by increasing youth involvement in program development, implementation, and evaluation, community-based arts programs for street-involved youth could offer contexts (zpd) for all of the stakeholders to perform "a head taller."

**Youth Development**

The emerging field of youth development draws on Vygotsky’s developmental approach to offer strategies and methods for engaging youth more fully as decision-makers, policy and program developers, and evaluators. This model promotes working with youth to create contexts where they feel valued, challenged, and able to develop the necessary skills and competencies to become productive members of their communities. In contrast to the deficit view of the past, youth development represents a shift to an ‘asset model’ of youth engagement where they are seen as ‘resources’ to be developed, rather than problems in need of fixing. From a youth development perspective, all youth,
regardless of their backgrounds, are viewed as possessing the capacity for positive development (Borrup, 2005; Brice Heath, 2000b; Lerner, Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002; Nitzberg, 2005; Sabo, 2003b). Although this perspective has universalist tendencies in its application to all youth, it does not prescribe developmental outcomes, and therefore is very much a process-driven approach for youth making changes in their lives. An exploration of this asset-based model of youth engagement illuminates recent developments in community-based arts programs to increase youth involvement, and helps to frame an approach for working with youth that may provide insight into how to bridge the gap between the stakeholders.

Kim Sabo (2003a, 2003b) attributes the shift toward the youth development paradigm to a convergence of factors, including a growing recognition of the importance of children and youth involvement in community development initiatives beginning in the 1970s, and with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. According to Sabo, the CRC, an international declaration of the rights of children and youth, helped to catalyze the movement to involve youth in decision-making at local, national, and international levels. Consequently, over the past few decades, youth internationally have been increasingly involved as partners and leaders in the creation of policies, as well as in planning, implementing, and evaluating projects that are intended to benefit them and the communities in which they live.

Lerner et al. (2002) suggest that developmental theory and research has evolved in recent years and recognizes that the relationship between individuals and contexts “constitute[s] the basis of human behaviour and developmental change” (p.13). This approach proposes that changes occur across a lifespan in accordance with a person’s
‘ecology’ including peer group, family, and community, in combination with their learning, working, and living environments. For this reason, proponents of youth development are concerned with the substance, quality, and adaptability of contexts or ecologies and their capacity to increase young peoples’ ability to “thrive” over their ability to produce specific outcomes. As a result, individuals working with youth in these contexts avoid prescribing how they should develop or what they should become to be successful and instead focus on creating ‘ecologies’ that promote their development. For this shift to greater flexibility and adaptability to occur it would require our institutions, at all levels of society, to become more accountable and responsive to their communities and, in particular, to young people’s experiences and perspectives (Lerner et al., 2002).

Ginwright and James (2002) argue that the prevailing institutional responses to youth issues - including gun violence, unemployment, drug use, and homelessness - are counterproductive because they continue to conceptualize young people as the source of these problems and fail to take into account the larger economic, social, and cultural forces that shape the lives of urban youth. Accordingly, they emphasize that “barriers to democratic participation are the greatest challenge facing youth” (p. 27) who, in our current conditions, lack political power, face extreme economic isolation, and experience ongoing social stigma. To draw attention to these issues as they affect urban youth and marginalized youth in particular, Ginwright and James propose an addendum to youth development which they refer to as ‘social justice youth development’ to examine “how urban youth contest, challenge, respond to, and negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives” (p.35).
According to Borrup (2005) assets are value-laden, hence, it is important for organizations that employ asset-based strategies to articulate their values in order to ensure that they build on strengths and competencies that are in keeping with those values. Social justice youth development offers a framework for this study that takes into account the issues and barriers of marginalized youth, regarding them not only as assets but as agents capable of transforming their conditions, and promoting their critical engagement as social change agents. While mainstream youth development practices can, at times, be construed as a basis to promote remedial education or job training in marketable skills, the social justice youth development framework ensures that the values of participation, democracy, inclusivity, equality, diversity, respect and self-determination are attended to in how programs serving youth function.

Youth Participatory Evaluation

Advocates of youth development are taking up participatory evaluation methods as means to engage youth in research and evaluation in order to: increase their knowledge of their communities, create opportunities for youth to expand their skills, improve the programs that serve youth, and improve the quality of life in their communities. In the context of youth-oriented and youth-initiated programs, Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) recognizes the right and capacity of young people to be involved in decision-making and shaping programs according to their needs (Sabo, 2003a, 2003b). A central feature of this approach is that it foregrounds the place of youth development in the evaluation of programs. According to Sabo (2003b) “[t]he inclusion of the term *development* within the field of evaluation would seem to require a significant paradigm shift, from product/outcome to process and from linearity to dialectics” (p.11). When the
focus becomes creating environments that "support ongoing growth and change" arguments about what is being measured lose significance.

Participatory evaluation, which is rooted in participatory and action research methodologies, has increased in practice since the 1980s. Understanding the connection between participatory evaluation and participatory and action research methodologies helps to explain the epistemological orientation of this evaluative process. Briefly, the origins of participatory evaluation can be traced to early community-based research initiatives which were the antecedents to 'action research,' the term used in the 1940s by American sociologist Kurt Lewin to describe the method he employed to involve laypeople as collaborators, practitioners, and producers of knowledge. This approach to research has spurred a number of disciplines in the field including Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Participatory Research (PR), that engage participants using a variety of qualitative research methods from conventional surveys to innovative arts-based inquiry. Although AR, PAR, PR, and other related practices share the basic principle of drawing on the expertise of community members, they differ in the extent to which the participants are involved in initiating, directing, producing, and implementing the research findings. For instance, AR has been used in workplaces to increase productivity while PAR is directed towards community-based social change (Barndt, 2004, 2005b; Sabo, 2003b).

Participatory evaluation emerged out of the principles and practices of participatory research, and was developed, according to Sabo (2003b) "as an approach to evaluate programs and organizations that supported the development of communities and
the empowerment of stakeholders” (p.3). Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) is a recent outgrowth of participatory evaluation that focuses on engaging young people as researchers/evaluators in matters of concern to them, and that is premised on the youth development paradigm which views youth as assets in their communities. The relationship between YPE and Vygotsky’s developmental approach to learning and development by creating zpds where youth perform “a head taller,” is evident in YPE’s emphasis on creating new roles for youth to perform in their own lives and the lives of their communities. The recent convergence of these approaches to working with youth in more vital, significant, and potentially transformative ways is timely in terms of this study, and the matter of how success is constructed and evaluated by the stakeholders.

In the following chapter I outline the methods of data collection that were used in this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for this study was done in three phases. In the first phase I examined the KYTES mandate and its principles and practices, in the second phase I looked at two primary HRSDC documents, and in the third phase I interviewed former KYTES participants. In each case, I used different methods of data collection to explore the construction of success, and I also include an investigation of the grounds for these perspectives.

Kensington Youth Theatre and Employment Skills

Data Sources

To collect data on the way KYTES constructed success I used three sources: 1) the KYTES mandate statement, 1) my personal experience and knowledge of the KYTES program and its operating principles and practices, and 3) research on the theoretical roots of community arts and critical arts engagement.

For the purposes of this study, the KYTES mandate that was written in 1997 by the staff collective is referenced to examine how KYTES constructed success. This mandate was chosen over the previous mandate because it more accurately reveals how the program and its leaders constructed success. The previous mandate stated that KYTES provided pre-employment training; at the time it was adopted KYTES was...
receiving the majority of its funding from HRSDC, and as such was required to provide pre-employment training and to stress this in its mandate. In 1997, when KYTES lost HRSDC funding, pre-employment training was removed from the mandate and replaced with an orientation to personal growth and social change.

The second source of data was my personal experience and knowledge of the KYTES program, its operating principles and practices. My personal experience and knowledge includes a compilation of data sources: 1) as a member of the staff collective that wrote the 1997 mandate statement for KYTES, 2) having knowledge of the historical roots of KYTES’ principles and practices, 3) as a witness to the funding relationship between KYTES and HRSDC, 4) having observed the circumstances of KYTES participants, their development at KYTES and their situations after KYTES, and 5) as a long-time student and practitioner in the field of community arts and critical arts engagement.

The third source of data that was used to examine the way KYTES constructed success consisted of research into the theoretical basis of community arts and critical arts engagement. The sources of data are the work of theoreticians and practitioners who have been formative in shaping the field. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to draw on the aspects of their work that reflect the way KYTES operated and constructed success.

**Methodology**

I began by looking at the KYTES mandate and unpacking its language, following Fairclough’s (1989) suggestion that text can be analyzed on three levels: 1) content, 2)
language used, 3) the ways that subjects are positioned within the document. Using this method, I was able to examine the mandate for its construction of success and the positioning of KYTES participants. Secondly, I drew on my personal knowledge of the 1997 mandate to theorize about why KYTES decided to craft it in this way. Thirdly, I used the mandate as the bridge to a discussion about the KYTES program and its principles and practices, followed by an examination of the theoretical underpinnings of the program to further investigate how success is constructed by KYTES and other community-based arts programs for street-involved youth.

**Human Resources and Skills Development Canada**

**Data Sources**

In the past ten years there have been two studies released by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada concerning the evaluation of its employment programs for youth. For the purposes of this study I have use both of these documents: Youth Employment Strategy: A Formative Evaluation of Youth Internship Canada and Other HRDC Youth Initiatives (2000) and Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth: Lessons Learned from Past Experience (1997).

Youth Employment Strategy (2000) is a 53-page report available for free on line from the HRSDC website. The report is a formative evaluation of a select group of HRSDC youth programs under the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), which was launched in 1997. It contains an outline of YES, a profile of youth - including population trends, education, and the labour market - an examination of youth internship programs, a
discussion of program outcomes, and it ends with a series of recommendations to address inter-departmental issues.

_Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth_ (1997) is a 19-page report that is also available for free on line from the HRSDC website. The nature of this report makes it particularly rich for an examination of HRSDC’s construction of success. It contains a wealth of information on relatively current trends in the youth labour market and “lessons learned” from evaluations of former and current HRSDC funded youth programs from 1977 to 1995. It also includes evaluations from youth programs in other countries. The authors of the report note that “the information produced for this report was used in the design of the new Youth Employment Strategy launched by the Federal Government in February 1997” (p. iii).

**Methodology**

After selecting these documents for review, _Youth Employment Strategy_ and _Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth_, were read in their entirety. After an initial read-through, key sections of the documents were noted and highlighted; these sections were then returned to for closer analysis. The following questions were used to draw out an understanding of the construction of success in operation in each of these documents: 1) How does this document construct success? 2) How does this document construct disadvantaged youth and their prospects in employment programs and the labour force?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I found myself asking the following more specific questions: 1) What kinds of employment strategies does this document
recommend? 2) How does this document characterize employment programs for disadvantaged youth? 3) What kinds of employment interventions does this document recommend for disadvantaged youth? In answering these questions, I began to sketch an idea of the way HRSDC structures youth employment issues and attempts to address them through their programs.

After creating a general picture of each of the documents I returned to key sections that seemed to be representative of the questions I was posing of each document. Following the work of Fairclough (1989) and Gee (1999), I then attempted to examine which discourses of success appeared to be present and which discourses appeared to be absent in these documents. In my analysis, I paid particular attention to the language used to describe success and to the ways in which the documents positioned disadvantaged youth.

Following an individual analysis of each of these documents I began to look at the ways in which these documents related to one another. I asked, how have the “lessons learned” in the 1997 document, Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth, been addressed in the 2000 document, Youth Employment Strategy? In this analysis, I worked to uncover the strategies HRSDC uses to reconcile what they have discovered through their evaluations of employment programs with the way they construct success.
Former KYTES Participants

The Qualitative Study

In my experience as a practitioner in the field of community arts and critical arts engagement, I have observed that the perspectives of youth are missing and/or underutilized in the evaluation of the very programs that are intended to serve them. The purpose of this empirical study, therefore, is to bring the perspectives of former street-involved youth and KYTES participants to the forefront, and into a comparative study on the primary stakeholders’ constructions of success. Specifically, I have used interview-based qualitative research to discover how six former KYTES troupe members construct(ed) success for themselves when they were in the program or shortly after and now, in reflecting on their lives since being at KYTES.

Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who suggest that the two primary functions of qualitative research are 1) to facilitate a nuanced understanding of its subject matter and 2) to present a critique of the “politics and methods of positivism” (p. 4), I have chosen this methodology to gain a fuller understanding of the experiences and perspectives of former street-involved youth in the KYTES program. During the course of this study, I suggest that the quantitative approaches government funders like those HRSDC use for evaluating programs only tell a part of the story. The role of the empirical study is to highlight what is absent. Researchers also suggest that qualitative inquiry helps to illuminate the contexts and contextual antecedents of what is being studied. Given that the circumstances of street-involved youth inform the ways they
construct success, this approach will assist in contextualizing their perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Moss et al., 2005).

**Researcher Reflections**

I am aware of the ways my long time experience in the field as a practitioner has intersected with the progress of my research. Without having extensive experience as a practitioner in the field of community arts and critical arts engagement, I would not have pursued academic studies or asked the questions that I have in this inquiry. The questions and concerns I have regarding the function of community-based arts programs in the lives of street-involved and disadvantaged youth advance while I continue to work in the field. They are part of an ongoing inquiry that will continue beyond this research study. Consequently, I am unable to separate my roles as practitioner and researcher but rather, consider my dual role to be complimentary and, in fact, beneficial to this inquiry. I bring a wealth of experience, a critical perspective, and an insider's knowledge of the field.

Research has found that for interview-based qualitative studies, building relationship and rapport with subjects is vital because it enables the researcher to get to the heart of the matter more quickly and thoroughly. Because the goal of qualitative inquiry is to create a better understanding of individuals and their contexts, knowing the youth who participated in the study proved to be useful (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 2000).

When I first decided to study some aspect of community-based arts programs, I was interested in finding out whether the critical orientation of KYTES drew street-involved youth to the program and whether this approach left any lasting impressions,
whether favourable or unfavourable. I was concerned that KYTES’ approach to critical education may have unwittingly reproduced oppressive power relations and silenced troupe members while attempting to empower them. In this regard, I share the concerns of Ellsworth who, in her article, *Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through The Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy*, she argues that “critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change” (p.310). Her study raises questions about whether the assumptions, aims, and practices of critical pedagogy are empowering, or whether they create repressive myths that subvert discussion and action arising out of the socio-cultural contexts in which people live. As a critical educator working in an environment where issues of oppression and social change were forefront, I wondered, upon reflection, whether the program presented another closed narrative rather than an open forum for the exploration of different perspectives.

Although the study was initially meant to be a critique of the strategies and methods used in KYTES to “empower” youth, I soon discovered in the interviews that the former KYTES troupe members had little to say on the subject of KYTES’ critical stance; nor did they have any interest in talking about specific areas of the program beyond the project of developing and performing the play. Instead, they spoke readily and positively about the importance of being in an environment where they felt accepted, supported, and challenged, and about the relationships they established with each other and the program leaders. They talked about what being in the KYTES program meant to them at that point in their lives and how their experiences at KYTES has affected their lives since. In our conversations, I was also struck by the impact that the closing of KYTES seemed to have on them.
The richness of their responses to questions about the impact of the program on their lives made me realize that I had to shift the focus of the study. And since it was perplexing that a program that appeared to have such a positive affect on its participants had closed due to a lack of funding, it seemed clear that the study needed to explore some of the underlying issues that cause programs like KYTES to lose the support of funders. Consequently, I decided that my ongoing inquiry into community-based arts programs would begin with an examination of the differing constructions of success that existed between the three main stakeholders in the KYTES program: the KYTES program and its leaders, HRSDC, and (former) KYTES participants.

**Research Design**

To discover how six former street-involved youth who were in the KYTES program constructed success for themselves at the time of their participation in the program, I engaged each of them in two reflective discussions using a semi-structured interview format. The main objective for holding two discussions on separate occasions was to allow an opportunity for me to listen to the interviews, take notes, and present my analysis of our earlier interview along with questions that arose from it for their feedback and further analysis. Secondly, I wanted to give them time to reflect on our first conversation and, if they wanted, to alter or add to what they had said previously.

I met with each interviewee prior to our first interview to give them a list of possible questions and discussion areas. At the time, I felt that it would be necessary to give them an opportunity to remember and reflect on their experiences at KYTES before we began. It turned out to be unnecessary to jar their memories - their ability to recall
minute details of the experiences was impressive and a bit surprising. Instead, it seemed that this initial meeting was an important way for us to catch up and re-establish our rapport.

Field notes were taken and used to chart my observations, thoughts and ongoing theory-building throughout the data collection process. Each two hour interview was recorded using a digital video recorder to enable accurate transcription. The tapes were transcribed using V-Prism and read through individually. General codes were developed using Atlas 0.1 in an attempt to organize the data and bring to the surface recognizable themes. These codes were then broken down into more specific codes in order to help to answer the research questions.

Research Participants

Over the period of a few months, I sought out a diverse group of former KYTES participants in terms of life experience, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. I contacted past participants through other programs, program leaders, and personal ‘leads.’ The youth who were interviewed for this study were still living in Toronto and in occasional contact with other programs associated with KYTES. Had I had more time, I might have been able to select from a larger group of youth who were peripheral to the contacts that were available to me. I also chose to interview youth who were at KYTES between 1995 and 2000, when I was the Theatre Director. I felt our already established rapport would be helpful in our conversations and would give me better insight into their circumstances then and now. Originally, I intended to interview five former troupe members but then
decided to include a sixth youth after he tracked me down in another city to be interviewed. All of the interviewees were over the age of 18 years.

In the next three chapters I present the findings from the three phases of data collection.
CHAPTER FOUR: HOW KYTES CONSTRUCTED SUCCESS

In this chapter, I begin by briefly outlining the KYTES program through its history, principles, and practices. Subsequently, I situate KYTES within the field of critical arts engagement, which I suggest is comprised of a bricolage of critical methodologies and is a shared field of practice among many community-based arts programs. In my experience working in the field I have found that programs and practitioners rarely articulate how they construct success, rather, they tend to express their objectives either in general terms like “empowerment” and “building self-esteem,” or in relation to the skills and competencies that participants gain through partaking in the programs. For instance, in funding applications KYTES would list activities like resume writing or nutrition counselling to point to the kinds of skills that were taught within the program. From these statements, readers could ascertain that the youth would embody these skills and competencies at the end of the program. KYTES is an exception among community-based arts programs in that it states in its mandate that its objective is to help youth become “self-sufficient.” What is also unique about KYTES is its overt association with critical methodologies and its commitment to social change.

KYTES uses popular theatre as part of a comprehensive program to assist disadvantaged and street-involved youth in achieving self-sufficiency as well as personal and social change (Collective, 1997).
KYTES' claim to an overt politic in 1997 was rooted in the erratic funding climate it weathered throughout its history. This points to the degree to which the stated objective of community-based arts programs are influenced by their relationship to funders as well as the predispositions of their program leaders. In view of this, I briefly outline the history of KYTES' funding relationship with the federal government agency that became HRSDC to show how fluctuations in funding affected KYTES. I then describe the KYTES program to reveal its principles and practices that were intended to develop specific skills and competencies in the youth. Following is an exploration of the field of critical arts engagement, which informs the underlying objectives of community-based arts programs and the ways programs like KYTES construct success.

A Brief History of KYTES' Funding

KYTES, which was originally named Kensington Youth Theatre Ensemble of St. Stephens, began in 1983 as a youth employment initiative that was funded through St. Stephen's. In 1989 the program received funding through Canadian Job Strategies (CJS), a federal employment program, job-skills training was added to the curriculum and the youth were paid minimum wage. In 1991 KYTES became an independent, non-profit organization and was renamed Kensington Youth Theatre and Employment Skills to reflect the program's commitment with CJS to provide job training to the youth participants. In 1993 85% of the budget was lost when the Canadian federal government cut funding to the program, claiming that KYTES was not successfully training youth for job placements. KYTES survived but was reduced to a 17-week program from 22 weeks, a skeleton staff, unpaid participants, and a smaller, less expensive location. In 1997
KYTES received federal funding once again through HRSDC's new Youth Employment Strategy (YES) program, which funded programs for disadvantaged youth that could guarantee employment-related outcomes. The following year, a scandal within HRSDC resulted in a funding freeze that meant KYTES lost the majority of its financial support. HRSDC did not reinstated funding after 1997 despite a verbal agreement that it would fund KYTES for 3 consecutive years. KYTES made every attempt to cobble together funding from other sources but without other options for sustainable funding, KYTES closed in January 2003, after 20 years of operation.

When KYTES program leaders rewrote its mandate in 1997, its commitment to offer “pre-employment training” to street-involved youth was replaced with assisting youth in becoming “self-sufficient.” In doing this, the intention was to be forthright about the program’s commitment to provide youth with tools to become less dependent on social services and street-based culture in general. Removing “pre-employment training” from the language of the mandate became possible because KYTES was no longer funded by an agency that based its support of the program on employment-related outcomes. Although KYTES continued to offer a comprehensive curriculum, the program was no longer compelled to formally connect its objectives to employment training or outcomes. For philosophical and pragmatic reasons, the program leaders felt that linking KYTES objectives to employment-related outcomes misrepresented the population they worked with as well as the underlying principles of the program.
‘The KYTES Model’

From 1983 to 2003, the KYTES program was a unique experiment in North America. Operated by a collective, KYTES used theatre to engage street-involved youth in a long term project intended to address their immediate needs and long term goals, culminating in a collaboratively created play based on their experience. KYTES began in 1983, in the Kensington Market area of downtown Toronto, with Pierre Tetrault and Katherine Marielle creating scripts based on existing stories with groups of youth as part of St. Stephen’s Community House’s employment program. St. Stephen’s estimated that their program had failed to effectively address the needs of about twenty percent of their clients, most of whom were known as ‘high-risk’ from around the Kensington Market area. From its inception, KYTES was designed to involve street-involved youth in an artistic process that was challenging and rewarding enough that they would see the project through to the end – the performance of a play. At the same time, the youth were offered a range of supports and services to help them become more stable and find satisfying and productive roles in the community. It was fundamental to the process that youth chose to be at KYTES, but in order to stay, they were expected to be there on time, everyday, and participate fully in all aspects of the program.

By 1995, when I was hired as the Theatre Director, KYTES was a seventeen-week program consistent with the semester system at the Toronto Board of Education. The program was offered twice a year to eighteen street-involved youth, aged 16 to 24, and included a theatre program; a satellite alternative classroom where youth worked on independent credits; life skills and “future options” workshops; mentorship and job shadowing opportunities; nutrition workshops; and one-on-one counselling. Throughout
its history, theatre, supportive counselling and education were the three key pillars of the KYTES program. The full-time schedule immersed ‘troupe members’ in collaborative artistic creation and skill-building activities that required a commitment to developing themselves and the project. The process highlighted the importance of effective communication strategies to create a cooperative environment and the value of being a reliable member of a community. This approach was rooted in the belief that learning to participate in and make a positive contribution to a long-term project would transfer to other areas of the youths’ lives and enhance their life prospects.

At the conclusion of each troupe, the youth produced an original collaboratively created play that was performed in the KYTES theatre space to often full houses. The KYTES plays dealt with issues associated with homelessness, poverty, and violence, and were vehicles for the youth to educate the public about their perspectives. Focussing their efforts towards a final production proved to be an effective way to keep the youth committed to the program. The prospect of having to produce a play as a team usually had the effect of increasing the stakes and their investment in the project as the performance drew near. For KYTES troupe members, most of whom had no previous experience in theatre, the crisis of getting a play ready for full production usually succeeded in supplanting the other crises that would often sabotage their efforts to make positive steps in their lives. For street-involved youth, who tend to self-identify as failures, seeing a project through to the end poses a significant challenge to the way they perceive themselves. However, once they succeed at completing a difficult program like KYTES, the hope is that their self-perceptions change.
While community-based arts programs like KYTES offer training in the arts led by professional artists, they are also a ruse for street-involved youth to learn a host of skills associated with being a fully committed, contributing member of an intensive long-term project culminating in a high-pressure public presentation. Along with performing new roles as actors, directors, lighting technicians, designers, playwrights and producers, the troupe members were also learning to be collaborators, reliable team players, problem-solvers and decision-makers. Youth who completed the program would necessarily be presented with many challenges along the way. KYTES aspired to offer transformative learning experiences with new support networks that would enable youth to continue developing in positive ways. From 1983 to 2003, KYTES worked with over 600 youth and produced over 34 plays.

A common feature of community-based arts programs like KYTES is that they use collaborative creation to develop artistic projects by drawing upon the life experiences of their participants as well as the social, political and economic contexts in which they live. To do this, program leaders often employ strategies and methods from a variety of fields including popular education, critical pedagogy, and Theatre of the Oppressed along with conventional theatre techniques to stimulate discussions, discover themes, facilitate art-making, and in the case of theatre, create scenes and eventually develop a play based on the personal (hi) stories of the youth participants, while also catalyzing a broader and more integrated understanding of the participants' social context.
Critical Arts Engagement

Community-based arts programs for street-involved youth like KYTES exist within the broad arena of community art, a field of practice that has gained momentum in the last fifteen years which draws on the conventions of popular education and participatory methodologies in the approaches professional artists use for collective artistic development and education (Cohen-Cruz, 2002). Currently, the field of community art is growing exponentially and the lines between what is considered to be “high” art and “community” art are blurring both aesthetically and theoretically. Put simply, the primary aims of community art as critical arts engagement are 1) to create art with communities, about their communities, and for their communities in collaboration with professional artists 2) to use a range of artistic and educative activities with (most often, marginalized) communities to assist them in participating more fully and critically in their communities and society in general.

The KYTES program, which grew into the conventions of critical pedagogy over its history, was committed, in principle, to the model of participatory pedagogy. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1983), Paolo Friere’s groundbreaking critique of transmissive educational practices, he calls on educators and learners to come together as co-investigators, seeking knowledge and “conscientisation” or critical consciousness through dialogue and praxis-oriented learning, a form of “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p.36). The practices that emerged and gained popularity through the 1970s and 1980s among progressive educators were largely efforts to “give voice” and hence agency, to marginalized populations using highly accessible participatory methods while engaging them in critical exchanges about the roots of their
oppression. When various art and media practices (including theatre, visual arts and video) were combined with participatory education, the ‘community arts’ movement was born (Barndt, 2005a). In Barndt’s research into community arts practices, she found that they have a “critical edge” over other art-making processes. Ideally, community-based arts programs like KYTES are contexts where program leaders and youth together raise questions, develop new knowledge and foster expanded possibilities for personal transformation and social change.

The notion of “giving voice” to marginalized people is a central feature of the practice of critical pedagogy. Friere (1998) asks “[w]hy not discuss with students the concrete reality of their lives?” because he, along with other critical educators, believes that to respectfully engage young people in a participatory process requires genuine acknowledgement and appreciation for the conditions of their lives and the knowledge that is derived from those conditions (Friere, 1983; Giroux, 1994; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Greene, 1995; hooks, 1994; Simon, 1992). In his critique of transmissive or “banking” education, Friere writes about the problem of “prescriptive” knowledge and “imposition of one man’s choice upon another.” The inclination to prescribe what is important knowledge within learning environments means that less powerful people’s voices, choices, and life experiences are suppressed. Friere argues that critical thought, which is vital to true education, can only come through a dialogic relationship between educators and learners. Similarly, bell hooks (1994) says that “the experience of hearing, of listening intently, to each particular voice strengthens our capacity to learn together” (p.186).
The role of the educator in these contexts is to use the telling strategically, to develop the connection between one’s personal experience and the broader social context of the experience. Through this process learners are encouraged to speak more freely and critically on other, socially relevant topics. The knowledge that people bring to a learning environment is, therefore, regarded as vital material for constructing new forms of knowledge in a critical and dialogic process (Boal, 1979; Friere, 1998; Giroux & Simon, 1989; hooks, 1994).

Maxine Greene (1993, an advocate for critical arts engagement in American schools, draws on Friere’s argument, stating that only when we begin to move from “abstract formulations to concrete renderings” by grounding our perspective on the world in lived experience can we recognize the situation for what it is, with both its limitations and possibilities. Greene suggests that the role of critical arts educators is to create contexts where people are able to speak about their lives and explore a version of the world beyond the seemingly insurmountable obstructions of “objective reality” to form a clearer understanding of the way society is constructed. In Greene’s view, critical arts practices offer the potential for marginalized youth who “have little chance to feel they can be yet otherwise than what they have become” (p. 39) to imagine themselves and the world as other than they seem. To this end, according to Giroux (1999), critical educators seek to open up spaces for young people to “experience and define what it means to be cultural producers” (p.111). In the field of critical arts engagement, young people learn to use art forms as literacies to participate more fully in what Greene refers to as “the continually emergent culture’s ongoing conversation.”
KYTES provided a context for youth to recognize themselves in other people’s stories, begin sharing their own stories, and then create a play out of the assemblage of stories that were offered. From this perspective, KYTES can be seen as a place where street-involved youth were encouraged to discover their individual and collective voices through theatre. It can also be seen as a place where youth were given opportunities to voice their perspectives in public forums and, in so doing, participate in conversations about their lives and futures in a nascent form of civic engagement. In *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) Augusto Boal introduced theoretical and practical approaches to developing theatre with marginalized communities that was participatory and intended to give participants tools to investigate the sources of their oppression and enact strategies for overcoming barriers – “a rehearsal for revolution” – by enacting the transformation of reality.

Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed techniques were adopted by KYTES in the early 1990s as the primary approach to play development and continued to influence the way plays were created until KYTES closed in 2003. Although the merits of Theatre of the Oppressed are questioned among theatre practitioners in the field of critical arts engagement, there is general agreement that theatre gives participants a venue to voice their perspectives, animate stories, and perform a variety of new roles. In the process of creating a play, theatre techniques are used by critical arts practitioners to engage participants in a co-investigative process, as a means of uncovering and examining the common threads or themes in the stories participants tell, while situating them within the wider socio-economic and political context.
The co-investigative or collaborative research process plays a vital role in critical pedagogy, community arts and critical arts engagement. Indeed, Barndt (2005) frames community arts as a form of qualitative research wherein “the artist or organizer of collaborative projects is also a research facilitator” (p.10) who engages participants in creating works of art “as part of the process of gathering, analyzing and synthesizing the data” (p.11). The role of critical arts engagement is to democratize and collectivize the production of art and knowledge by providing the means for people to express their identities, recover their histories, articulate their visions, deepen their analyses, and develop the capacity to participate more fully in creating their futures (Barndt, 2005a). From this perspective, KYTES used theatre as a research method within a participatory framework with the intention of creating transformative knowledge (Boal, 1979).

The intersecting fields of popular education, participatory research, critical pedagogy, community arts and Theatre of the Oppressed have been crucial in shaping the objectives of the KYTES program and community-based arts programs for street-involved youth generally. Although programs like KYTES rarely state their objectives explicitly, KYTES revised its mandate in 1997, stating the objectives of the program were self-sufficiency in connection with personal and social change. This overtly political statement by KYTES program leaders clearly situates its construction of success within the field of critical arts engagement in keeping with its operating principles and practices. The approach to critical arts engagement programs like KYTES employ is rooted in the belief that for transformational change to occur in their lives, street-involved youth require forums to express their unique perspectives, and practical and theoretical tools to participate more fully and critically in society.
CHAPTER FIVE:  
HOW HRSDC CONSTRUCTS SUCCESS

Presently in Canada, disadvantaged youth aged 15-30 who are not in school, lack job training, and are unemployed often turn to programs funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), to bridge gaps in their experience and gain skills and competencies that will lead to future employment. HRSDC is the federal agency responsible for national employment and training programs as well as the management of national homelessness, labour issues and the Canada Student Loans Program. These programs are sponsored by a range of training providers including private businesses, public educational institutions, band councils, municipal governments and not-for-profit organizations (Canada, 2004b). HRSDC (2000) explicitly states that their objective is to “help youth prepare to have a job, to get and keep a job and to make a successful transition from school to work” (p.2). While these initiatives may have their own systems of evaluation, HRSDC requires end of program evaluative reports that summarize outcomes along these lines for them to receive future support.

In this chapter, I discuss how HRSDC constructs success in the programs it funds for disadvantaged youth. I begin by briefly outlining human capital development, the theory underlying HRSDC’s current policy in relation to education and training. I then examine HRSDC’s Youth Employment Strategy (YES), along with Skills Link, the branch of YES that deals specifically with programs for youth who face barriers to employment. Within this examination, I explore some of the shifts that have occurred in
Canada’s federal employment training strategy for disadvantaged youth and refer to HRSDC’s evaluation of their programs to point to the role the economy plays in HRSDC’s construction of success. In the final pages of this chapter, I explore how changes in the global economy have affected recent developments in education and training policies in North America while touching on the current debate about how these policies affect young people attempting to join the labour force.

HRSDC’s vast mandate applies to the areas of employment education and training for adults and youth, career development, and labour and homelessness issues across the country. The current mandate statement for the federal agency is as follows:

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) is responsible for providing all Canadians with the tools they need to thrive and prosper in the workplace and community. We support human capital development, labour market development and are dedicated to establishing a culture of lifelong learning for Canadians (Canada, 2004a).

According to human capital development theory, which is at the heart of HRSDC’s employment training strategy, investments in education and training are expected to increase the knowledge and skills base of the population and promote overall economic growth (Livingstone, 1998; Wotherspoon, 1987).

A Brief History of Human Capital Development Theory

The conceptual origins of human capital development can be traced to the post-WWII era of economic nationalism, at a time of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. During this period, the creation of alliances between public and private stakeholders including all levels of government, businesses, educational institutions, and
families, fostered a sense of economic and social progress that served the interests of both capital and labour. Governments of the day invested in an array of state expenditures including public education and welfare provisions to ensure growing profits through a skilled labour force and an economically stable family structure (Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Stuart Wells, 1997).

Mass education in the 1950s, through the common school system, was seen as instrumental in producing ‘human capital’, a well socialized, well trained, and skilled workforce consistent with principles of homogeneity and nationalism and key to technological and economic expansion. The basic tenets of human capital theory in the era of economic nationalism were 1) people can be educated to perform specific functions in society, 2) investments in higher education are compensated through higher wages, and 3) society will benefit from the increased productivity of a highly skilled labour force (Halsey et al., 1997; Wotherspoon, 1987).

Since the early 1970s, the socio-economic and political landscape has changed drastically with the demise of economic nationalism and the rise of the global economy. In the era of global capitalism, governments have responded by making conditions as favourable as possible for international enterprise by dismantling national barriers to the movement of capital, downsizing costly government-sponsored institutions and social programs, and diminishing the power of labour unions to promote competitive enterprise on a global scale (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Halsey et al., 1997; Wotherspoon, 1987). As a result, job security has eroded and more people find themselves having to adapt to what has been termed the ‘flexible’ workforce.
In the late 1980s, the Organization for Economic and Community Development (OECD) focussed its attention on education as the key to economic growth, thereby prompting the return of human capital theory in matters of policy development (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004). The federal government’s current emphasis on developing the skills base of the Canadian labour force is regarded as necessary to keep pace with technological innovations and global competition, and is reflected in the directions educational policy and employment training strategies have taken. As a consequence, the “school-to-work transition” has been the focus of HRSDC programs for the past 20 years (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2000). In the case of youth who have been out of school and unemployed for a long period of time, HRSDC’s Skills Link program is geared to providing basic job-skills training to help youth make a transition into the labour force.

Youth Employment Strategies (YES)

The HRSDC’s commitment to human capital development has far-reaching affects on how it formulates policy, constructs success and evaluates its job training programs. Youth Employment Strategies (YES), the funding stream within HRSDC that adjudicates proposals for youth employment initiatives across Canada, is the latest of several training strategies focusing on skills development that have been implemented by HRSDC over the past two decades. In 1997 the government introduced this strategy: “to assist youth in gaining work experience, which would allow them to make the transition from school to work” (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2000). The objective of Skills Link, the branch of YES specifically designed to increase the employability of disadvantaged youth, is described in the following way,
Skills Link helps youth facing barriers to employment - such as single parents, Aboriginal youth, young persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, youth living in rural and remote areas and high school drop-outs - obtain the knowledge and develop the broad range of skills and work experience they need to participate in the job market (Canada, 2004b).

Under the new provisions, HRSDC’s criteria for participant and program eligibility has become very specific. Youth who are eligible for these programs must experience distinct barriers in order to gain access to programs and the programs themselves must show employment-related outcomes in order to receive ongoing support through HRSDC.

Over the past 20 years, successive HRSDC strategies have employed shifting criteria to determine which youth programs are awarded funding. The current direction YES has taken with Skills Link is a departure from previous government employment training strategies which funded programs serving a more diverse group of disadvantaged youth using a wider range of approaches to skills development. HRSDC’s shift to become more prescriptive about their funding targets and the kinds of outcomes that are produced by training programs can be attributed to the influence of human capital development theory on policy development, as well as a response to the high level of youth under-employment and unemployment.

In an HRSDC sponsored report published in 1997 examining the effectiveness of HRSDC programs from 1977 to 1995, the researchers found the youth labour market to be characterized by “increased volatility of employment and increased underemployment” (p.2). According to the study, where once high school drop-outs (and, it should be added, disadvantaged youth) were able to find unskilled work in
factories or in resource industries such as forestry, fishing, and mining, currently, if they
are able to find work at all it must be in the low-wage, high-turnover, service sector.
Recent changes in the labour market have also resulted in increased levels of
unemployment and underemployment for post-secondary school graduates.
Consequently, the researchers suggest that even though education is necessary for “labour
market success,” it no longer guarantees graduates a steady income or a job in their field.
In general, the study suggests that the employment prospects for young people entering
the job market are uncertain.

The authors of the 1997 report offer the following reflections on labour market
success in the global economy:

The rewards for success – stable, highly-paid and intellectually-fulfilling
work – seem greater than before but far less certain. The alternatives to
such success for the unlucky; and for those unable or unwilling to compete
for positions in the labour market elite, have become less certain (p.1).

According to the study, success is constructed along a continuum with “stable, highly-
paid and intellectually-fulfilling work” associated with the “labour market elite” at one
end and “less certain” employment to be had by the “unlucky” or those who are “unable
or unwilling” to compete for “good jobs” at the other. From the researchers perspective,
it appears that there is a limited number of young people who will find elite positions in
the current labour market while most, it seems, will endure less steady and less certain
job prospects. If, as the study suggests, one’s success finding gainful employment is
uncertain and less dependent on one’s level of educational attainment than in the past,
how does HRSDC evaluate the success of training programs for youth who are “unlucky”
or “unable” to compete in the current job market?
Evaluating the success of a program is a difficult task according to HRSDC's, 1997 study. The researchers identify frequent fluctuations in job market skills requirements and geographical variance in employment needs among the factors that make it difficult to evaluate HRSDC's funding strategies and HRSDC funded programs. Overall, the report found the impacts of most training programs to be modest and characterized by high drop-out rates. While some programs were found to produce "intermediate results" such as a reduction in "anti-social" behaviour and increased educational attainment, these achievements were not recognized as employment-related impacts by HRSDC standards and, as a result, the programs could not be considered effective.

HRSDC funded programs that were deemed to be successful in producing employment-related outcomes were intensive and provided support services such as counselling and job search assistance along with the training. In these cases, the researchers found it difficult to distinguish the impacts of the job training-related portion of the curricula from the impacts of other support services within comprehensive programming. They also found the cost per person in these programs to be high and, like other job training programs, to have high drop-out rates.

In order to effectively evaluate employment training programs, the study maintains that a substantial amount of data must be collected over a period of time. As this data was not available at the time of the study, the long-term effects of HRSDC programs could not be determined. According to the study's authors, the difficulties associated with collecting data on the long-term impacts of employment training programs on youth who face barriers to employment, are related to the instability of
programs and the challenge of tracking participants after they leave the programs.

Instead, they cite international evidence to suggest that “the benefits from training take
time to appear and may accrue slowly” (p.13). In short, the lack of discernible short-term
benefits and the paucity of long-term studies make it difficult to evaluate the impacts of
HRSDC’s job-training programs.

What are the implications of HRSDC’s Youth Employment Strategy: A Formative
Evaluation of Youth Internship Canada and Other HRDC Youth Initiatives (2000) and
Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth: Lessons Learned from Past
Experience (1997) on the way HRSDC currently constructs success and evaluates the
success of their programs? Despite their findings, both studies suggest that employment-
related outcomes – mainly increases in employment and earnings – should continue to be
the standard measures of success for all HRSDC training programs.
CHAPTER SIX:
HOW FORMER KYTES PARTICIPANTS
CONSTRUCT(ED) SUCCESS

KYTES is about a lot of different things for a lot of different people. Some go in saying “I want to get back to school and I like theatre,” and others go in and say “I need housing ‘cause I have a kid and I need to support my kid,” and someone else says “I do too many drugs, maybe I should lay off the drugs and maybe I should start thinking about getting into a shelter,” or “I panhandle”, “I’m a prostitute.” If there’s one thing, it’s about making changes in people’s lives. (Justin)

In KYTES and with this new group of people you had a chance to reinvent yourself. I had a chance to be what I wanted and so did they. Until then, I’d always been in familiar territory with people who totally knew what to expect from me. (Adam)

In this chapter, I look at the way youth participants in the KYTES program construct success. I begin with a sketch of the interviewees as they were when they started at KYTES and then at the time of our discussion. The next sections use excerpts from the interviews to outline their reflections on the KYTES program, their perspectives on success, and discuss how they would measure the success of programs like KYTES.
A Brief Introduction to the Youth, Then and Now

Following are descriptions of the six former KYTES participants who were interviewed for this study. These profiles outline what they were doing before they attended the KYTES program, their reasons for joining KYTES, and a brief description of what they were doing at the time of the interview. When they participated in the KYTES program all six interviewees were street involved youth falling between the ages of 17 and 21. When the interviews were conducted, four to seven years after they completed the program, they were between 20 and 26 years old and all still considered youth by HRSDC standards.

Stephanie

When Stephanie, a heterosexual Caribbean-Canadian, came to KYTES she was 17-years-old, had been out of school for two years, a ward of Children’s Aid Society, and lived in group homes and foster care before relying on shelters or ‘couch-surfing’ for a place to stay. ‘I was just kind of transient at that time, bouncing from one place to another, a shelter one month and a friend’s place the next.’ Her mother was diagnosed as schizophrenic and Stephanie was on medication for manic-depression. ‘They put me on Paxil for a couple of months and Paxil made me totally manic so they said I was manic depressive. They put me on Esuval which made me depressed even though they said it’s a mood stabilizer.’ Stephanie described herself as being very shy and withdrawn when she started at KYTES. Stephanie joined KYTES looking for ‘a daily program, something I could go to Monday through Friday.’ while living in a shelter. She was also attracted to the $500 end of program honorarium, the prospect of getting high school
credits, doing theatre, and ‘the alternate setting of KYTES that I thought would be more comfortable for me.’

At the time of the interview, she was a 23-year-old new mother with no source of income, living with a partner who worked part-time at two jobs. They were living in unstable housing and had plans to move.

Anna

Anna, a queer Philippina/Anglo-Canadian from a middle-class background, was 19-years-old, out of school for one year, couch-surfing, and collecting welfare when she started at KYTES. ‘I was on student welfare and going to high school and then I had a really hard time so then I was on full-time welfare.’ She did not identify as street-involved or like the rest of youth in the program. At the time, KYTES ‘seemed like something to do ’cause I hadn’t come to a decision that I wasn’t going to complete my high school diploma so it seemed like a good idea.

KYTES seemed structured and I was really interested in that in my life – to have a comfortable atmosphere to start learning about structure.’

At the time of the interview Anna was 26-years-old, attending her first year at University of Toronto, and living independently in an apartment.
Jenny

Jenny, a queer, brown South African was 18-years-old when she started at KYTES. Before KYTES, she attended an all-girls Catholic school. She left home to get away from her physically abusive brother and moved in with her boyfriend.

‘Things were getting really, really tough and my dad and my brother were becoming harder and harder to deal with and my brother was becoming more and more abusive. I remember how scared and intimidated I was. I had stigmatized welfare recipients and high school dropouts and then all of a sudden I was one. I had come from this place where I was ‘booksmart’ and got thrown into this other way of living where there was the same level of intelligence but the type of knowledge was different. They were ‘street smart.’ They knew how to feed themselves and clothe themselves even though they didn’t have the resources.’

Jenny went to KYTES because she ‘wanted something to do, a focus, and a challenge’ but the biggest reason was ‘that I could graduate high school through KYTES.’

At the time of the interview Jenny was 24 years old, working as a waitress, and living independently in an apartment.

Justin

Justin, a heterosexual Spanish/Anglo-Canadian, was 17-years-old when he started at KYTES. He was kicked out of home and left school in grade 10. ‘When I left school I was living in a shelter. I got kicked out and I was sort of in school while I
was on the street and that didn’t last long.’ Before KYTES he was ‘drinking and
drugging a lot and not caring about the future. I was cutting myself up, almost a form
of tattooing. I was doing it because I was just fucking pissed off at myself. Mentally
and emotionally I was nowhere near good.’ While at KYTES he stayed in shelters,
couch-surfed, and panhandled. He was drawn to

‘the theatre aspect of it and a chance to try something new. I liked drama when
I was in school and it meant getting back in school and getting on track. I
wanted to feel a bit more stable. I just knew I wanted to change something
about myself but I wasn’t quite sure what that was.’

At the time of the interview Justin was 24-years-old, working as a sous chef in a
restaurant and living at home with his mother.

Robert

When Robert, a heterosexual Anglo-Canadian started at KYTES he was 21-years-
old, out of school, living in semi-independent housing, had recently completed a two-year
jail sentence and was in a methadone program to counter a heroine addiction.

‘Before I went to jail I was on the streets. When I got out I arranged an
apartment and stuff. I had an idea going to KYTES was something that I’d like
more than some of the alternative schools. I went to KYTES to do something
and meet people too. A lot of the people I knew at the time weren’t really people
I wanted to spend too much time with.’
At the time of the interview Robert was 25-years-old, living with his girlfriend in an apartment and had occasional employment as a carpenter.

Adam

When Adam, a queer Anglo-Canadian, started at KYTES he was 17-years-old, couch-surfing, and taking prescription dextroamphetamine for “attention deficit disorder” (ADD).

‘The doctor prescribed the drug which was a form of speed because I didn’t go to class, I didn’t understand math, I didn’t like sciences, I liked to sing and paint pictures in the washroom. My mom would show up for the teacher-parent interviews and the teacher would say, “Does Adam have a bladder problem because he never shows up for class?”’

Prior to that he had been attending an alternative school in the city. According to Adam, his locker at school was ‘more of a liquor cabinet. I was dealing with a lot of things and just trying not to hate myself because all my life I’d been taught to hate what was really there. I was abusing myself and abusing the people around me.’ Change was his motivation for joining the KYTES program. ‘To change where I was going, change my surroundings, change what I had to look forward to. KYTES was a place where I felt I was going to actually get the attention that I never got.’ He was also interested in the theatre program and in earning high school credits.
At time of interview he was 20-years-old, had recently completed a youth filmmaking program, was living with his boyfriend in an apartment, and was occasionally employed.

Of the six former KYTES troupe members, no one said they had joined the program for the purposes of developing employment-related skills or as a means to employment. Instead, they expressed interest in high school credits, getting an honorarium, having something to do, learning about structure, trying something new, experiencing a challenge, the theatre program, and as a way to change something about themselves. All of them cited having personal issues related to their street-involvement to work on as underlying reasons for going to KYTES. Referring to this phenomenon, Anna suggested that at KYTES ‘the troupe members were their own project,’ in that each person had something specific to their situation that they needed to address while they were in the program.

Reflections on KYTES

In the following excerpts from the interviews, the youth reveal their reflections on KYTES and some of the reasons they may have stayed in the program. Based on personal experience and supported by HRSDC’s 1997 report, high attrition rates are common among programs for disadvantaged and street-involved youth. Above all, the youth participants emphasized the central role that theatre, and the relationships they formed at KYTES, played in keeping them invested in the program.

All of the interviewees spoke reverentially about the plays they created together. Adam said ‘it’s inspiring to think about what we did and what we put together’. While
Robert said ‘it seemed like we were way behind and then all of a sudden we had a play. It turned out good. Actually, doing theatre made me think a lot about film-making. I would say it made me more attuned to visual things.’ On the other hand, Stephanie was more pragmatic about the role of the play: ‘overall the play was important to do because it had all of our voices and each one of us had something important to say. Just getting that out there is important.’

In the course of creating the plays strong relationships were formed. Adam compared the experience of being a member of a troupe with that of being on a sinking ship where everyone is forced to ‘be real with each other.’ Anna and Stephanie suggested KYTES was like being in the military, which Anna described as ‘people putting themselves through something, a test or a trial, to see what they have to give.’

The following excerpt is from Jenny’s journal that she wrote while in KYTES:

‘I think that happiness can be attained at the most unexpected times. That a group of people who had no idea the others even existed 3 months ago can find a closeness never found before, can share experiences they hadn’t conceived of, can find feelings they thought they had lost. Memories, smiles, laughter, friendship, commonality, confidence, joy, bonding, all brought on by strangers. Strangers who stepped out of their lives, got up from their graves, broke free from their chains, tore away their inhibitions, gave a shit about themselves and found each other.’

However, not all troupe members got along and not all troupes were congenial. The references to the military may accurately describe the experience of putting themselves through something for a greater cause. Anna, who was a member of one of the less
cohesive troupes, theorized that being different or resistant to mainstream values and practices was what brought the group together.

'I felt a lot of the people were joined by their inability to fit into a mainstream educational system. The street thing was a common denominator but it seemed more about an inability to comply with a mainstream education system.'

She also found many of her fellow troupe members to be unmotivated:

'I think a lot of people thought it was going to be easy but it was really hard getting there on time, committing to it, mandatory attendance. They seem like really simple things but a lot of people had problems with it.'

The intense relationships between participants and those formed with the program leaders were mentioned quite often in the interviews as key to their appreciation and enjoyment of KYTES. Robert offers a description of the overall “community-ish” sensibility of KYTES:

'My impression was that it was small but that was good, community-ish. I felt like it was a very open space, a neighbourhood that was easy to walk in and out of.'

As these findings demonstrate, theatre combined with the relationships the youth formed in an intensive, collaborative process became their primary motivation for staying at KYTES though their initial motivations for joining the program may have been different. Most of their successes appear to be connected to the challenge of putting themselves through something as a group.
Constructions of Success

When asked directly about what they gained at KYTES, the former troupe members spoke mostly about the personal changes that occurred as a result of their experiences in the program. I was struck by their unanimous ability to clearly articulate the impact their time as troupe members at KYTES had on their lives. Most noticeable is the subtle nature and simple quality of the personal changes they observe as stemming from their experience at KYTES. Common themes in the way they constructed success for themselves include accomplishing something, gaining motivation and confidence, and developing a sense of resourcefulness. However, for the most part the achievements or successes they cite lack the pragmatic and specific goal-oriented qualities that the funders are looking for, or the transformative tone programs like KYTES may seek. What is also remarkable about these findings is the extent to which their constructions of success reflect their life experiences, or lack thereof, as street involved youth.

Justin referred to his experience as a ‘momentous confidence builder.’

'It's taught me not to feel bad about my failures. "So what, it didn't work out, move on." It helped me in life to realize that I don't have to condemn myself to shit because I didn't do something the way it's supposed to be done.'

Similarly, Stephanie talks about developing a more positive self-image and the confidence to forge her own path in life:
'I was being bombarded with all these negative things about myself and KYTES was able to show me that there are positive things about me. I can go out and do my own thing and fulfill my own prophesy instead of proving everybody back there that they're right.'

'I know I'm able to do something, I'm able to start and finish it. If I didn't have that boost of confidence, I might still be transient and in the shelters somewhere.'

In the following descriptions of their achievements at KYTES, the interviewees speak about the skills and competencies they gained:

Justin: We came out with a lot of good skills. I think it made me more employable. It showed that I could work in a team.

Jenny: I got my credit, I graduated high school, I applied to George Brown College which I never thought I would actually do. I became more of the person I am now. It gave me the courage and the ability and the know-how to go and apply to school.

Robert: KYTES had a role in my transition from being on the streets and being in that sort of world where I expected less out of life. It was easy for me to not think about tomorrow. I am resourceful, that's how I describe myself now. That's quite a skill, to get up and go.
Anna: KYTES gave me more time. It was good for me seeing my options. Even though I didn’t do something immediately, it was good for me to check out my options and have them really accessible. I got to explore that type of school commitment and then I went to University of Toronto later.

Stephanie: The decision to finish things is practice for me. That’s an investment. And I finished.

The successes that the youth identify, like increased confidence and the ability to accomplish something, may be a sign that KYTES successfully responded to the needs of this group of youth who initially joined the program to acquire the basic tools that would assist them in transitioning from street-involvement. Although this group did not identify finding work as a motivator, it is interesting to note that, in their constructions of success, they connect the basic tools they acquired through the program to future school and work prospects.

After KYTES

KYTES had a policy of arranging a ‘next step’ for troupe members into school, further training, or employment. All of the youth interviewed, with the exception of Adam, left their school, training, or work placements within six months. After KYTES, Jenny was accepted into the theatre program at George Brown College but left after a few months. Justin’s experience is similar:
‘After KYTES I wasn’t really in shelters. I went to school and I was at my ma’s place. Midway through my semester, I left but I was a bit more stable mentally and emotionally.’

Robert was employed for a short period of time by an agency that worked with street-involved youth and then went on to do occasional carpentry work. He describes his journey after KYTES:

‘After KYTES I felt really good, I felt on track but then...I wasn’t really working. A lot of people who left KYTES didn’t go on to do traditional jobs. I haven’t made that much money. I haven’t had an over-the-table job so I guess I haven’t had a job in HRSDC’s eyes.’

Of the six participants interviewed, Adam was the only person who continued to pursue school or work.

‘I only ended up getting 2 credits at KYTES. But after getting those 2 credits, I went hard-core back into school. I’ve been pretty much go, go, go since I finished KYTES and I haven’t stopped really. It’s amazing to come this far and look back and see where that change came from.’

Adam is now studying theatre in university.

**Measuring Success**

When I asked the youth how they would measure the success of programs like KYTES, they suggest evaluating a project based on what participants were doing before and what they do afterwards. According to them, this would reveal whether the project
was an important step in their development. None of them proposed any specific indicators of success, rather they implied that success is a matter of making positive changes in one’s life and is something that needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Their responses also reinforce the extent to which their constructions of success differ from HRSDC and KYTES.

**Stephanie:** It would be good to ask the people who’ve been in the program whether they’re still doing the same things that led them to KYTES.

**Justin:** I would measure success by how people feel going into the program and then coming out of the program ‘cause I certainly felt a hell of a lot different. You can’t really go to funders though and say, “Well he feels good now so you should give us money for our program. He might not have a job but he feels good.”

While all of the youth agreed that the evaluation of programs like KYTES needed to change, they struggled to think of ways that it would be possible to satisfy the government’s need for employment-related outcomes. Some of the responses they gave included Anna’s argument that ‘[t]he demographic that you’re dealing with are high-risk street-involved youth. You’re not going to be able to determine what success is for them.’ According to her ‘KYTES seems like a faith project, you can’t measure it.’ By this she meant that the funders have to have faith in the ability of programs like KYTES to do whatever possible to give street-involved youth the tools to succeed in ways that are achievable. Jenny stated that ‘KYTES is not an investment-return type of program. Unfortunately, they look at everything by “How much good is this going to do?” or
"How much money is this going to make?" or "How useful are these people going to be?" I wish that there was some way to quantify it for people who need to see those results.'

Both Jenny and Justin suggested that it takes time to see the kind of success that HRSDC is looking for.

Jenny: The funders are looking for immediate success and success is not measured in the short-term and that's what is misunderstood.

Justin: Say you talked with your mother when you were 15 and she gave you some advice and it was like, "Yeah, whatever." And then you're 25 and it finally kicks in and you go, "I finally realize what she was trying to tell me." KYTES is the same sort of thing.

Finally, Adam suggests a relationship between funders and program participants might help the funders to understand what is happening in the lives of the participants.

'Anyone who felt it was worth their big wad of cash would not be afraid to get down and dirty and actually see what the project was doing and meet the people before and meet them after and actually care, have a real passion for what was happening. The things that are important to the people who are sitting up there are really the last thing on anyone's mind sitting within the troupe. It's a different world.'
Adam is suggesting a funder/agency relationship similar to that of arts organizations where site visits are an integral part of the relationship, whereas at KYTES we rarely met any of our funders.

These findings from the interviews point to the length of time it takes for street-involved youth to find their moorings once they take steps to transition from street-involvement. They also suggest that programs like KYTES can provide basic skills and competencies to assist youth in building more positive identities that may help them transition from street-involvement, but are not able to lift the barriers to their success - especially in a short-term program. Most of the youth were presenting employment-related outcomes at the time of the interviews, four to seven years after completing the KYTES program, which seems to indicate that their experience at KYTES gave them some of the tools to succeed in this way. Perhaps the personal achievements that the youth spoke about reveal something about what they were capable of achieving at the time they were at KYTES or are more indicative of the way KYTES constructed success. Regardless, the youth’s successes appear to be fundamental and long-lasting in the way they have led them to pursue other projects including education and employment. From this perspective, evaluations of programs like KYTES should take into account the long-term impacts that they can have on the lives of street-involved youth.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

It's not until we actually just talk that we can understand where other people are coming from because everyone's opinion is unique and has a place, right? I think it's great to have these opportunities to begin a conversation and then to have the learning branch out from there, from what everyone has to bring to it. (Adam)

How HRSDC, KYTES, and Former Street-Involved Youth Construct Success

As we can see in this study, the stakeholders are constructing success in dramatically different ways. The characteristics of these constructions range from being prescriptive (employment-related outcomes) to open-ended (discovered by participants), and from universal (applied to all youth in HRSDC programs) to individual (dependent on the participant). Most noticeably, the achievements that former KYTES youth identified as indicators of their success related to changing self-perceptions, while HRSCD is seeking increases in employment. Looking at these findings from a socio-cultural perspective, they suggest that the stakeholders adopt the values and perspectives of their social and cultural milieu in a manner that shapes their view of the world. Hence, to understand what constitutes success for each stakeholder, the specific social and
cultural contexts they inhabit needs to be taken into consideration (Kinchelese & McLaren, 2000; Moss et al., 2005; Renshaw, 2002).

This study found that KYTES is a step - large or small - toward different outcomes for different youth. In my interviews with former KYTES troupe members the changes they identified as being indicative of their success were, for the most part, associated with shifts in their self-perceptions. All of them said they had succeeded in gaining a variety of skills and competencies through the program including increased confidence, resourcefulness, motivation, and a sense of completion and achievement. However, in contrast to HRSDC’s employment-related criteria, being in school or having a job were not a part of their personal constructions of success at that time in their lives.

The achievements that the interviewees attribute to their participation in the KYTES program differ substantially from the employment-related outcomes that HRSDC require as a basis for funding programs for street-involved youth. Although each of the youth had a post-KYTES strategy that included further training, going to school, or a job placement, only one participant remained in their placement for longer than six months. Participants’ experience of success in the program also differed from the transformative objectives of self-sufficiency and social change found in the KYTES mandate. Instead, the changes the youth participants identified were of a personal nature (similar to the “intermediate” results cited by the HRSDC study) and can be attributed to the challenges posed by the demanding structure, intensive collaborative play creation process, and the support each youth received through the program to make positive changes in their lives. Although the job-training aspects of the program and the social justice orientation of KYTES may have been useful in some way in the youths’
development, the impact of those aspects of the program were not mentioned by the interviewees. These findings point to the challenges short-term programs like KYTES experience producing employment-related or sustained educational outcomes, or the degree of self-sufficiency and transformational change they hope the youth will achieve.

Although KYTES was not successful in producing immediate employment-related results, all of the interviewees (with the exception of Stephanie, a new mother) are presenting employment-related outcomes four to seven years after leaving KYTES. (An interesting note is that KYTES claimed it took street-involved youth an average of five years to transition from street-involvement, once they made the decision to change their lives). Whether being at KYTES had anything to do with their success in terms of employment is difficult to establish due to the passage of time. However, given that these youth have transitioned to work and school situations, the successes they relate to their time at KYTES may have been initial steps towards greater self-sufficiency and bigger challenges.

In addition to the stakeholders’ different constructions of success, this study reveals the dramatically different values of the stakeholders. Using a socio-cultural lens to understand these differences, we can see that the stakeholders’ values are rooted in the social and cultural contexts they inhabit. From a critical socio-cultural perspective, values are also believed to arise out of relations of power (Lipman, 2004). According to Apple (1974), “evaluation itself is a process of social valuing. It involves one or more groups of people assigning values to activities, goals, and procedures done by others” (p.8). While it is obvious that the stakeholders have vastly different amounts of power, their differing values are worth examining given that they underlie their priorities and the
way they construct success. Although each stakeholder is committed to improving the circumstances of street-involved youth, their values play a vital role in shaping the way they believe this goal is best achieved.

Another key observation that has emerged during this study is the way that each stakeholder situates themselves ideologically in relation to the hegemonic association between success and employment. To gain a fuller understanding of how each stakeholder is positioned in relation to this construct, the following sections look at the critical ideology of KYTES, the capitalist ideology of HRSDC, and the counter-cultural ideology of former KYTES participants. As this study shows, the gaps that exist between the stakeholders’ constructions of success create a disconnect between them that has significant repercussions for each stakeholder.

**KYTES – Critical Perspectives in a Funding Conundrum**

What distinguished KYTES from most other government funded training programs for youth in Toronto was its commitment to setting priorities with youth rather than for them. This shift occurred over time with the discovery that, unless participants were actively taking charge of the decisions affecting the course of their lives, they were more likely to abandon the strategies put in place to help them transition from street-involvement. Eventually, KYTES came to more fully recognize and appreciate the youths’ previous experience, skills, and knowledge as central to the artistic process but also as fundamental to their ability to determine their own needs in relation to their future goals. The primary role of the program leaders at KYTES was to present youth with a range of experiences that would help them to identify their goals and then assist them as
much as possible in making positive changes in their lives to achieve those goals. By providing a comprehensive, challenging, and highly structured program centred around the development of a collaboratively created original play, KYTES sought to create an environment that would appeal to a range of interests and abilities and offer participants a variety of experiences that they could pursue once the program ended.

Many of the changes that the KYTES program underwent over the course of its twenty year history were based on pragmatic attempts to appease the demands of its funders as well as political responses to the shifting socio-economic circumstances. In the late 1980s, with the rise of neo-conservatism in Canada, KYTES came to associate itself more openly with critical perspectives and the use of Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in its work with street-involved youth. This shift however, increased tensions between KYTES (and its growing self-image as a vehicle for transformational change and political engagement) and the funders’ perceptions of what street-involved youth needed in order to be successful in their lives.

In her research into out-of-school youth-based organizations, Brice-Heath (2000b) found “learning ecologies” that fill “institutional voids,” caused by the breakdown of relationships, the ‘back-to-basics’ approach in schooling, and the lack of meaningful work for youth in their communities. Among the programs she studied, she found that community-based arts programs that cultivate the experiences, issues, interests, and perspectives of ‘at-risk’ youth fill a gap in the existing out-of-school programs available to youth (2000a, 200b). In keeping with HRSDC’s 1997 and 2000 studies, Brice-Heath (2000a, 200b) discovered that achieving ‘the basics’ in school no longer ensures greater employment opportunities in the present global economy. Instead, she found that youth
are required to possess skills like cooperation, teamwork, and creativity, competencies that are not taught in the ‘back-to-basics’ school curricula but are offered through their experiences in out-of-school programs, and particularly arts-based programs like KYTES.

Brice Heath’s findings are consistent with recent reports that suggest governments and corporations now emphasize the importance of individuals possessing certain social dispositions and generic skills to be successful in the job market. Young people entering the labour force are now expected to have the necessary educational background and social attributes to prepare them to adapt to the changing needs of the labour market. However, this demand-side strategy makes youth even more accountable for the uncertainty of their employment prospects. Citing HRSDC’s recent statement that, “the definition of essential skills for the workplace has evolved beyond the 3 Rs to include dimensions such as oral communication, thinking skills, working with others, continuous learning and computer use” (p. 325), Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) warn that the demand for a greater number of higher level skills reduces the chances of disadvantaged and street-involved youth in being able to fulfil employment-related outcomes.

In the quest for limited funding, educators and program leaders have had to become increasingly attuned to the imperatives of the labour market and learn how to justify their programs in terms of the contribution they make to the economy. For instance, fundraisers for community-based arts programs for street-involved youth like KYTES now often find themselves advocating for their programs in terms of the training they provide youth in the skills and dispositions required by the ‘flexible’ labour force. As well, arts-based programs have come to shape their curricula to meet HRSDC
employment-related criteria by adding resume writing, job search skills, mentoring, and career planning to their curricula and promote their activities as offering "pre-employment" or "transferable skills" to satisfy the demands of HRSDC policy.

According to Edelmen (2000), to access funding programs often adopt rhetoric that makes them sound like panaceas for social and economic problems. In doing so, warns Edelman, community-based programs also create unrealistic expectations that they are unable to fulfil. Under the circumstances, and drawing on Brice Heath's findings, one can see how tempting it is for arts-based programs in particular, to advocate for government funding on the basis of their unique ability to offer youth a range of skills, competencies, and experiences that are transferable to the labour force. However, this strategy requires programs to adopt practices that undermine their principles, and in the long-run, their own financial stability.

KYTES program leaders were aware that sustainable employment-related outcomes were beyond the reach of their participants but chose to submit to the funders' criteria by placing youth in jobs and schools in order to ensure ongoing funding. As a result, programs like KYTES perpetuate the myth that short-term job-training programs are able to make street-involved youth fully employable; participants are placed in situations where they are likely to "fail" after just coming out of a program that showed them they were able to complete something; and funders are led to believe that their expected outcomes are justifiable and achievable in the hands of competent programs.

The principles and practices of critical arts engagement and social justice youth development are directed towards creating environments that promote zpds, wherein
young people are challenged to perform "a head taller." In these contexts, achieving specific outcomes is less important by far than creating and maintaining critical ecologies that encourage development and transformation. From the perspective of critical arts engagement, which in principle seeks to expand young people’s options to participate more fully and critically in society, it is problematic to promote community-based arts programs as vital adjuncts to schools that help to prepare young people for the labour force. As we can see from this study, this approach not only undermines the principles of community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, but also sets the programs and the youth up for failure. Until we gain a deeper understanding of the role these programs play in the lives of youth, their funding will continue to be in jeopardy.

This study suggests that better assessment practices are needed to gain a fuller understanding of how these programs can and do contribute to the lives of youth, and how community-based arts programs might be improved to better address their needs. From the perspective of critical arts engagement and youth development, program evaluations that include the perspectives of participants are more democratic and reflective of progressive directions in program development, delivery, and evaluation.

**HRSDC – Human Capital Development Theory**

HRSDC has stated that an individual is successful if they have “stable, highly-paid and intellectually fulfilling work” (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 1997). The HRSDC’s construction of success is reflective of a universalist perspective which presumes people are “cut from the same cloth” and are basically capable and desirous of the same things regardless of their social and cultural
backgrounds or changes in their social and material conditions (Holland et al., 1998). This is evident in HRSDC’s expectation that the programs they fund across Canada produce employment-related outcomes regardless of the participants’ background, experience, or circumstances. At this time, these are the only outcomes that are recognized and valued in their strategies.

The field of critical policy analysis, which views policy-making through a socio-cultural lens, examines policy decisions, according to Lipman (2004), as “an expression of values arising out of specific social contexts and relations of power.” From this perspective, we are able to recognize the ideological roots of current HRSDC policies and to question their ‘common-sense’ functions in the present social context (Ozga, 2000). Citing Gramsci, Lipman (2004) states that “hegemony works to impose a particular understanding of social problems and to define the parameters of possible alternatives so as to limit the possibility of thinking otherwise” (p.14). Hence, what are generally accepted as ‘common-sense’ approaches to solving issues like unemployment have been framed by the interests and values of policy-makers and tend to exclude alternate ways of dealing with these issues. Keeping this in mind, we can begin to understand the reasons for the gaps that exist between the government’s ‘common-sense’ responses to issues of homelessness, lack of education, poverty, and marginalization and the approaches that programs with direct experience with these issues might take. For instance, HRSDC’s policy to fund programs that are able to demonstrate their ability to make disadvantaged youth employable, is indicative of the value that is placed on employment and developing the labour force to meet the needs of the labour market. This is an entirely logical goal within the current ‘common-sense’ approach most neo-liberal Western governments are
currently taking to solve the problem of unemployment, address the need for a skilled workforce, and meet the ever-shifting demands of the global economy.

The HRSDC’s evaluative study (2000) of its Youth Employment Strategy clearly states that the objective of their programs is to prepare youth to “have a job, to get and keep a job and to make a successful transition from school to work” (p. 2). In the past twenty years, schools and programs have been under increasing pressure to provide skills training in both in-school and out-of-school programs for young people to facilitate their transition from school-to-work and from welfare-to-work. Human capital development theory views the relationship between education/training, employment, and the economy as interdependent and, thus requires that current government policies uphold this relationship by regulating the curricula and outcomes of education/training programs. However, as this study shows, the approach human capital development theory takes leaves little room for alternative approaches to education/training or for other than prescriptive employment options or life choices. In the field of educational assessment, critical social theorists such as Moss et al. (2005) have raised concerns about the way assessments valorise certain kinds of skills and knowledge while disregarding others, and thereby constructing notions of success and failure in limited ways.

There are strong parallels between how success is constructed in HRSDC programs and schools which are also the site of struggle between those who have “the power to define what constitutes legitimate knowledge and those excluded from educational decision-making” (Halsey et al., 1997). The role economic interests and human capital development theory in practice play, in influencing policies and strategies
to increase economic growth by dictating the content and direction of education and skills training, was clearly stated in 1986 by George Radwanski an Ontario policy advisor:

To compete effectively in a new knowledge-intensive global economy that relies primarily on human capital, excellence in educating our workforce is our single most important strategic weapon. An economically advanced society’s ability to compete will depend increasingly on having sufficient world-class experts to provide innovation and leadership, and a general workforce with the skills and flexibility to carry out sophisticated and rapidly changing tasks (Gidney, 1999).

In response to increasing pressure to gain competitive advantage within the present economy, young people are now looking to education and training in unprecedented numbers. However researchers suggest that even though education is necessary for “labour market success,” it no longer guarantees graduates a steady income or a job in their field (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 1997). Hence, despite claims that education is a strong indicator of labour market success, the employment prospects for young people entering the labour force are uncertain and much worse for disadvantaged and street-involved youth who lack education, job experience, and cultural capital.

In reviewing HRSDC’s 1997 study, where the researchers construct those who have access to the “labour market elite” as lucky and “the unlucky” as those who are “unable or unwilling to compete for positions in the labour market elite” (p. 1), it is clear this is a demand-side perspective of the current labour market. In this view, the barriers young people face finding employment are portrayed as a consequence of their lack of education/training, luck and willingness to find work. There are several problems with the researchers’ analysis beyond their uncritical depiction of the youth employment
problem as a matter of young people being unable to meet labour market demands rather than an issue of the lack of supply of decent employment opportunities. While the “new consensus” is that education is the key to national and personal prosperity in the global economy, there are a growing number of “junk jobs” in the marketplace and a widening gap between ‘good jobs’ and ‘bad jobs’ in an increasingly segregated job market (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Gidney, 1999; Halsey et al., 1997; Lipman, 2004; Livingstone, 1998). At issue in HRSDC’s 1997 study is that among the unlucky, unwilling, or unable are disadvantaged and street-involved youth who, in the context of HRSDC programs, are meant to learn basic job skills to work in ‘junk jobs’ rather than being given opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for them to compete in the elite labour market. Gaskell and Rubenson (2004) argue that the training unemployed people receive is not geared to preparing them for highly skilled jobs but rather to working in the growing low-wage job sector. The current streaming of disadvantaged and street-involved youth into ‘junk jobs’ means they are competing with educated, underemployed young people who are unable to find jobs in the elite labour market. Given the high cost of tuition, street-involved youth are given few options for education and training beyond government funded programs and the segregated labour force.

According to Lipman (2004) in her study of Chicago’s inner-city schools, the “tiering of educational experiences and opportunities” (p. 11) takes on new meaning in the present context when knowledge is much more directly implicated in increasing one’s life chances than in the past. While one cannot deny the important role of education and training in preparing young people for their working lives, the current emphasis on skills-based training, referred to by Gidney (1999) as “skills mania,” promotes teaching
disadvantaged youth generic vocational skills to the detriment of other areas of learning. This shift to skills-based training also denies youth some of the broader purposes of education in developing resourceful individuals who are able to make critical choices about how they choose to participate in and contribute to their communities.

In the current debate about whether human capital theory is delivering on its promise to match educational achievement with employment status, Riddell (2004) suggests that investments in human capital continue to be “an important source of potential growth in earnings and employability” (p.50) but that there may be “unobservable factors” contributing to the positive correlation between education and employment such as “ability, perseverance, and ambition” (p.50). However, it appears that success lies beyond one’s personal ability, perseverance, and ambition and is constructed to benefit the “lucky” while leaving the “unlucky” at a disadvantage. Following Bourdieu (1997) and Luke and Carrington (1997), young peoples’ cultural capital and habitus play a significant role in influencing their ability to access higher education and training and figures prominently in their ability for find work commensurate with their skills.

In HRSDC’s 1997 study, *Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs for Youth*, the researchers’ findings confirm the difficulties many community-based arts programs for street-involved youth experience fulfilling HRSDC criteria. These include high drop-out rates, the need for costly, comprehensive, and intensive programming to address the gaps in social and personal barriers, a highly competitive low-wage service sector job market, and the challenge of tracking the life trajectories of youth after they leave programs. Although the stakeholders’ constructions of success are vastly different,
there is evidence to support the need for a re-assessment of priorities to meet actual outcomes. In keeping with what we came to understand at KYTES, the authors of the 1997 study acknowledge that

[the] fact that a program has only a small impact does not necessarily mean that it is not worthwhile. It may be cost-effective – producing a positive return on the investment of public funds – and may be critical to turning around the lives of particular young people (p.4).

By its own admission, HRSDC suggests that measuring success using employment-related impacts is not realistic due to high drop-out rates, the difficulty in isolating the impact of training in comprehensive programs, shifting job-skills requirements, underemployment, and problems associated with providing adequate intervention to youth who must overcome a multitude of personal and structural barriers to be successful in the labour force. Hence, the difficulties KYTES encountered producing employment-related impacts for HRSDC are acknowledged in the report as being largely exogenous to the programs. In light of these findings, how is it possible to bridge the gap between stakeholders’ constructions of success when HRSDC maintains employment-related outcomes as the measure of success for programs like KYTES?

This study argues that HRSDC’s failure to account for the unique circumstances, experiences, perspectives and distinct barriers street-involved youth face in urban centres in Canada, will limit the viability and effectiveness of federal employment strategies like Skills Link. Street-involved youth in programs like KYTES come with a range of perceptions about what they need to achieve in these programs to make positive changes in their lives, yet funders like HRSDC fail to acknowledge anything other than employment-related outcomes as legitimate. The notion that one’s social, cultural,
historical or material circumstances should have little influence on the immediate
direction of people's lives is one of the primary assumptions and flaws of HRSDC's
prescriptive, outcome-based evaluations. In the course of my work, I have observed
many street-involved youth struggle to become punctual, to develop self-confidence, to
set goals and meet them or to stay in a home, program, school, or job for any length of
time. Accomplishing these and other developmental goals count as success for youth
who struggle with a variety of basic issues.

According to Moss et al. (2005), a socio-cultural perspective has been missing
from our assessments of programs where learning is conceptualized within the narrow
parameters of work, rather than an expanded view of how different people can participate
in and contribute to their communities in different ways at different times of their lives.
From this perspective, assessing the success of programs like KYTES must also look to
the specific social and cultural contexts of the participants to understand what constitutes
important knowledge, development, and success for them at that point in their lives
(Moss et al., 2005; Renshaw, 2002). Marginalized and street-involved youth's failure to
meet dominant culture's criteria for success in these contexts may be seen as much as an
indication of their resistance to dominant constructions of success as a consequence of
their circumstances and lack of dominant forms of cultural capital. In the case of
community-based arts programs, funders cannot expect that street-involved youth will
necessarily succeed in prescribed ways or in keeping with dominant constructs of
success, nor does their 'failure' to meet prescribed outcomes mean they are incapable of
succeeding. Through the lens of socio-cultural theory, it is possible to recognize how
current assessment practices tend to reproduce and sustain the cycle of street-involvement
and the related problems of exclusion, marginalization and resistance. Following the advice of Mayers (2001), if we want to design situations for street-involved youth that accomplish these goals more effectively, we need to seek their participation in program development and evaluation.

Fear of the Cog: Street-Involved Youth and Counter-Cultural Values

In the course of my interviews with former KYTES participants, a number of the youth talked about the difficulties they experienced in school due to boredom and their resistance to their teachers' authority. Most of them also spoke about their aversion to corporate and consumer culture as well as the idea of working in low-paid, high-turnover service sector jobs. The findings from this study suggest that the promise of entering the bottom tier of the labour force is simply not enough to motivate many street-involved youth to stay in training programs or the jobs that are available once they complete them. Youth who are critical of dominant cultural values are not likely to be interested in conventional job-skills programs; they are also likely to resist the templates of work and success that are implicit in HRSDC job training strategies.

In her study of street-involved youth culture in Canada, Mayers (2001) discovered that the majority of youth she encountered held counter-cultural views and a contempt for dominant cultural values. From a critical socio-cultural perspective, street-involved youth would be inclined to reproduce their socially constructed selves by rejecting mainstream constructions of success, and refusing to participate in programs that reproduce the values, behaviours, and perspectives of dominant culture. Following are a few of the comments from the interviews that demonstrate the interviewees' resistance to
dominant cultural values and their perceptions about the kind of jobs that are awaiting them at the end of training programs.

Justin expressed his perception of what dominant culture expects of young people in this way:

‘we’re all conditioned to “cut your hair, go to school, graduate, fucking get a good job, have two kids, get a fucking white picket fence, and grow old and die,” “that’s the way you have to do it, that’s the way everyone does it.”’

As HRSDC’s 1997 study indicated, the jobs available for disadvantaged youth are primarily low-paying, high-turnover, service sectors positions. And, unlike youth with more options, the programs available to street-involved youth are only geared to training them in basic job skills. Hence, on top of the personal barriers they encounter to securing “stable, highly-paid and intellectually fulfilling work” are structural barriers that prevent street-involved youth from being able to access the education and training they need to compete in the labour market elite.

Robert was openly critical of job training programs that are intended to prepare youth for these kinds of jobs instead of helping him to find something that would be satisfying and longer-term:

‘The government compares KYTES to all these other programs that really suck. Yeah, they’ll help me get a job flipping burgers or working in a Roots factory but they’re not going to help me find something that I’m going to want to stay at, to keep doing and get better at. I know lots of people who got jobs out of those programs but not many of them are still doing those jobs.’
He then talks about his and his peers' resistance to doing work that contributes to corporate culture. Both Robert and Adam used the example of computer training to talk about the issues they have with specific kinds of job skills training.

'I think computer skills are good to learn but still think they serve a purpose of corporatizing people and selling them stuff. A lot people don't want to contribute to shit. And that's how I see a lot of it. I don't want to contribute to it.'

Adam also suggests that computer training undermines community within street-involved youth culture.

'I think the worst idea would be to hold a computer course for at-risk youth. They are a group of people who still are in touch with each other, with people, which is something that I think a lot of people are gob-smacked at.'

Given the choice between working in low-wage, high-turnover jobs or being on the streets, Robert says

'You know, I'd rather be poor and out taking a walk with empty pockets than be doing something shitty and have money.'

Anna's thoughts on the expectation that street-involved youth should have jobs by the end of programs were similar.

'I felt like everyone at KYTES had a fear of the cog. Like being colonized. Doing it. Just give in and be colonized.'
The counter-cultural values that these youth express along with the way they construct(ed) success for themselves at KYTES, suggests that there is a very significant gap between the way HRSDC and street-involved youth construct success. Moreover, to expect that street-involved youth will have a linear trajectory to stable employment once they leave programs like KYTES is an unrealistic model that reinforces the kind of failure that they expect from themselves. Consequently, this study suggests that we need to re-evaluate existing HRSDC criteria and ask for a more nuanced understanding of street-involved youth culture that recognizes that success looks different for different people at different stages in their lives.

In her research, Brice Heath (2000) found that the youth she encountered in community-based programs “feel the need to do something different, to chart new means of accounting for the self and make meaningful connections, and to learn in new ways for purposes and goals not yet acknowledged by most adults.” Based on the findings in this study, one of the advantages of community-based arts programs like KYTES is that they offer environments where counter-cultural values can be articulated and given constructive expression and direction. According to Brice Heath (2000), participants in these programs are given tools to transition from street-involvement and to participate in and contribute to their communities in positive ways. Arts-based programs facilitate mentorships between youth and artists who, by virtue of their work, are also outsiders and role models for alternative yet productive life choices. For street-involved youth who want to leave the streets in exchange for stability and security, yet still resist the trappings of dominant culture, community-based arts programs can help bridge the gap from the streets to challenging, structured environments that not only accept but encourage who
they are and who they are becoming. In this way, programs like KYTES help youth reintegrate into the wider community in ways that offer counter-cultural alternatives to dominant culture’s constructions of success. Though it goes without saying that the government bodies that fund these projects will continue to regard them as environments where learning and a degree of integration with the rest of society must take place, what is needed is a better understanding of the possibilities that exist for street-involved youth beyond the low-wage, high-turnover jobs.

**Youth Participatory Evaluation**

Giroux and Simon (1992) advocate for the creation of ‘social forms’ as alternatives to the present institutions that “make possible the realization of an expanded set of differentiated human capacities” (p. 22). From a social justice youth development perspective, street-involved youth deserve to have access to a wider set of options than the low-wage, high turnover jobs that await them at the end of government funded training programs. With this in mind, Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) can be seen as an alternative social form that can be used within programs like KYTES to work with youth to create programs that more effectively address their needs while they are in them, and expand their options afterwards. YPE suggests that involving youth in decision-making in connection with programs that are intended to serve them 1) is their right, 2) contributes to their development, and 3) is beneficial for all of the stakeholders. The strategies and methods employed in this approach focus on giving young people the skills, competencies, and experiences that will enable them to make positive choices and
take the necessary steps to achieve their goals, thrive in their communities, and succeed throughout their lives.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural perspective of development, suggests that higher order functions develop out of the social interactions that take place in "zones of proximal development" (zpds), the spaces that exist between who we are and who we are becoming. Like youth development, the principles and practices of YPE are directed towards intentionally constructing contexts that promote zpds wherein young people are challenged to perform "a head taller." In this way, YPE offers opportunities for youth to move from experiencing their scripted social positions to making their way into cultural worlds as knowledgeable and committed participants (Holland, 2005).

This approach to program development and evaluation has the potential to be beneficial for all of the stakeholders - funders, programs, and participants alike. In terms of the advantages of involving youth in program development and evaluation YPE 1) involves participants at the start of programs by doing a needs assessment which gives program leaders and funders a baseline understanding of the circumstances of each youth, 2) from the needs assessment, the stakeholders are better able to design program curricula (create zpds) that corresponds with the needs of the group, 3) gives the stakeholders opportunities to take part in setting more realistic short- and long-term goals, 4) offers youth a forum to talk about how they construct success; how they hope to construct their lives and perhaps explore alternatives that may not resemble the life choices and values of funders, 5) increases youth participation which may increase their stakes in the program, as well as their sense of ownership and accountability, thereby lessening their resistance to programs and reducing attrition rates.
In contexts where YPE is used, achieving specific outcomes is considerably less important than creating and maintaining environments that encourage the participants’ development. The focus, therefore, shifts from evaluating the success of programs based on the participants’ achievements at the end of programs to making assessment part of an on-going process throughout the programs. When we begin to see street-involved youth as resources and actively engaged agents capable of making valuable contributions to, and learning from, the development and evaluation of programs, it seems clear that we need to implement strategies such as Youth Participatory Evaluation to include them more fully in creating more effective community-based arts programs.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

"The challenge is how best to rebuild the kind of village it takes to raise a child and the kind of village a child can help to build" (Cahn & Gray, 2005).

This study has provided a window into the dilemma of evaluating community-based arts programs for street-involved youth. This dilemma is one that all of the stakeholders – the participants, programs, and funders - are currently caught in, and experience the implications of, while attempting to improve the circumstances of street-involved youth. As is seen in this study, programs like KYTES attempt to satisfy HRSDC’s funding criteria by framing their work as helping youth transition from the street to the labour force, however the reality is that for most of the participants steady employment is still a long way off. As a consequence, participants often find themselves in a situation where they are expected to transition into a job once the programs have ended to satisfy HRSDC’s employment-related criteria and the program’s need for funding. However, as the findings in this research and HRSDC’s 1997 evaluative study demonstrate, most disadvantaged and street-involved youth are unlikely to stay in programs or job placements for long. In view of the difficulties programs encounter realizing the outcomes HRSDC demands, one would expect that they would alter their
criteria to create more realistic expectations for both the programs and participants. Yet, in HRSDC’s 1997 study, they state that employment-related outcomes are the most effective way of measuring the success of their programs.

How is it that this problematic situation continues when the stakeholders appear to agree on the broader objective: to improve the circumstances of street-involved youth? It appears that the reasons for this are linked to gaps in understanding and a lack of communication amongst the stakeholders.

To gain a fuller understanding of the dilemma, this study examined each of the stakeholders’ constructions of success and found them to be dramatically different. By exploring the values underlying their constructions of success as well, it becomes clearer that the gaps are as much ideological as they are material. As we know, the dominant ideological framework that privileges employment-related outcomes over the kinds of personal changes that the youth identified, affects how arts programs for street-involved youth are evaluated. This study suggests that the current government criteria used to evaluate this, and similar projects, is severely limited and perhaps altogether inappropriate for this population. The kinds of impacts that KYTES has had on the youths’ lives are far more subtle and personal than the funders are currently able to acknowledge or incorporate into their evaluations of these programs.

According to HRSDC (1997), evaluating programs is extremely difficult. Although the HRSDC researchers suggested that studying the long-term impacts of programs would reveal whether they successfully helped youth to enter the labour
market, they found these studies almost impossible to implement because the programs are not around for long and their program leaders and participants are too hard to locate:

A large number of employment programs have come and gone over the past fifteen years. It may be difficult to generate the resources and enthusiasm for studying the post-program success of trainees, ten years after their training, in an environment where both the program and its proponents may have long-since vanished (p.17).

Ironically, the reason long-term studies are not feasible has partly to do with the structural and conceptual limitations of the program evaluations that are being used by HRSDC and the programs.

When asked how they would measure the success of programs like KYTES, a number of the youth who were interviewed said that they think before and after or comparative qualitative studies would best reveal whether, and in what ways, programs like KYTES are benefiting individual participants. At present, the quantitative data that the HRSDC uses to evaluate community-based arts programs fail to take into consideration the circumstances of youth when they start and leave the programs. Hence, there is no way to determine whether the programs have assisted individual youth in making positive changes in their lives. This study therefore suggests that evaluative processes consider the circumstances of participants when they enter programs in order to create more realistic and achievable short- and long-term objectives.

In the introduction to Friere’s Pedagogy of Freedom (1998), Stanley Aronowitz cites Nietzsche’s call for “new principles of evaluation” in his discussion of the need for a new “series of concepts” to replace the “fixed set of criteria” that lead to “superficial measurements of social policies” (p.13). In order to bridge these gaps in understanding
and communication, it seems apparent that all of the stakeholders need to be involved in re-assessing the current criteria and process for evaluating programs. As it stands, evaluations used by both HRSDC and programs like KYTES are severely limited. The most glaring omission that needs to be addressed is the lack of youth participation in the evaluation of programs that are meant to serve them.

Current program evaluations are most often implemented at the end of programs at the request of funders, or by the programs themselves. However, immediate, post-program evaluations provide a superficial view of their impacts. Based on the findings of this study, without rich pre- and post-program qualitative data about the youth, it is difficult to assess the influence of programs in helping them transition from street-involvement to more stable and healthy circumstances. The qualitative data that is now gathered in program initiated evaluations - including interviews and questionnaires with the participants about their perceptions of the programs - are often used reflectively and selectively for the purposes of program development or to promote programs to potential funders. The quantitative - statistical data related to employment outcomes - requested by funders such as HRSDC is gathered by the program leaders and documented in written reports. With few exceptions, qualitative data is not required or requested by funders of community-based arts programs. Understandably, qualitative approaches to program evaluation are less expedient; they take time to develop and deliver, and produce findings that require more in-depth analyses than the clear picture statistical data provides. However, as this study shows, without having personal accounts of the participants’ experiences, the quantitative measures most often sought by government funders to assess programs tell only part of the story. Until we gain a deeper understanding and
appreciation of the role these programs play in the lives of street-involved youth, funders such as HRSDC will continue to cast a questioning eye on the accomplishments of community-based arts programs. Consequently, funders and program leaders alike need to develop better assessment practices to gain a clearer picture of how programs are contributing to the lives of youth and how they might be improved.

In the recommendations section of the 1997 study, HRSDC researchers state that “common sense lies at the heart of all evaluation research.” In order to better evaluate HRSDC programs, they suggest that attention be given to studies that “have estimated program impact, rather than those which simply provide formative assessments or descriptive analyses” (p.16). Most importantly, they suggest that “[b]efore a program can be evaluated, the desired outcomes and the time period over which the occurrence of those outcomes will be measured must be specified” (p.16). Finally, they conclude that “a non-experimental evaluation of any single program may well be equal to, or better than, an experimental evaluation.” For this to be true, however, they argue that “non-experimental evaluation must be in the hands of skilled analysts who have access to a rich set of pre- and post- program information” (p. 18).

Based on the HRSDC’s proposal for non-experimental evaluations that are able to estimate program impacts using rich pre- and post-program data, it is possible that a solution to the current limitations in evaluating community-based arts programs for street-involved youth, can be found in Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE). As a stakeholder who is invested in finding ways to improve current evaluative practices to make programs more effective, responsive, and accountable to the needs of funders and
participants, I suggest that YPE could help to move us toward designing more effective programs, and more effective program development and evaluations.

This study suggests that before YPE is widely implemented in programs, what is needed is 1) a rich source of information on YPE based on a review of YPE experiments internationally, 2) to implement YPE in a community-based arts program for street-involved youth as a case study and, 3) to conduct a micro-analysis of the quality of the youth participation and changes in program effectiveness where YPE is being implemented. By increasing youth participation in the creation of contexts where they are given opportunities to perform “a head taller” we, as stakeholders, will also be compelled to develop in new and challenging ways.
APPENDIX INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you hear about KYTES?

2. What appealed to you about the KYTES program?

3. What were your circumstances when you started KYTES?

4. Did being in KYTES alter these circumstances at the time? If so, how did your circumstances change? If not, why?

5. How did you support yourself financially while you were at KYTES? Did being in the KYTES program give you more or less financial stability at the time? Did KYTES advocate on your behalf to help you access welfare?

6. What did you hope to gain through being in the KYTES program?

7. Did you/your life change as a result of being in the KYTES program? If so, how?

8. What have you told/do you tell other people about KYTES?

9. What is/was your most memorable experience about the program?

10. What criticisms do you have of the program?

11. What challenges did the KYTES program present for you? Were these challenges helpful or problematic at the time? In retrospect?

12. How would you characterize the KYTES program in terms of its approach to the following: education, artistic creation, counselling, advocacy, life skills development, nutrition, future options, mentorship, and social change?

13. Did the program help you to acquire a set of skills or tools to help you to make changes in your life? If so, what skills/tools did you develop through being at KYTES? In what ways were they helpful?

14. Did the program help you to become more aware of the social/political/economic circumstances that affect your life? If so, what effect has this had on you?
15. Were there circumstances specific to you and your life that made the KYTES project and its approach to education and the arts attractive to you or more attractive than other similar options?

16. The emphasis of the theatre program was on establishing and promoting group trust, cooperation, and collaboration in the development of an original play. What was your experience of the theatre program?

17. Did the collaborative artistic development process alter your sense of community and/or your relationship to the wider community? If so, in what ways?

18. Was the KYTES play you were involved in responsive to the political, economic, and/or social conditions of the time? Was this important or meaningful to you? If so, in what ways was it important or meaningful? If not, why?

19. Did the play your troupe created reflect your lived experience?

20. Was there value in performing theatre that was thematically connected to your life experience? If so, what was the value of this experience? If not, why?

21. Describe your experience of performing a play that you were involved in creating and that was informed by aspects of your life? What affect did this have on you?

22. What affect did the nature of the artistic work have on you – from collaborative play development through to performance?

23. What were/are your feelings about the final play?

24. How would you describe the quality of your relationships with the KYTES staff?

25. Did the KYTES staff behave in ways that you feel were respectful of your knowledge, circumstances and experience?

26. What would you identify as being the intention of KYTES?

27. Do you feel the KYTES program empowered you (gave you a sense of power and control) and enhanced your sense of personal dignity and respect? If so, how? If not, why?

28. Did KYTES support and challenge you to clarify your goals, identify your needs and issues and address them through the course of the program? If so, how? If not, why?

29. Did KYTES offer you a critical perspective/framework that you believe has helped you to better understand your personal circumstances as a (former) street-involved youth?
30. In what ways can community-based arts projects for street-involved youth be more responsive to the interests and needs of street-involved youth?
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