Teenagers and Music: Examining the Role Music Plays in the Development of Youth

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ABSTRACT

TEENAGERS AND MUSIC: EXAMINING THE ROLE MUSIC PLAYS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH

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This thesis is an investigation of Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre’s Music Program. It provides a unique opportunity to elucidate the elements that promote positive youth development. As a case study, qualitative analysis using semi-structured interviews, a validation focus group and participant observations were conducted to examine patterns. The data was analysed using a conceptual framework. Stories of the youth were told exploring themes: learning, positive youth development, the five ‘C’s, flow, meaning and identity, opportunity, staff challenges and creativity. The case study found varied evidence of youth development across these themes. This research explored youth’s identity exploration, creativity, flow experiences, learning and opportunities. Emerged patterns raised new questions in regards to previous research on Fusion, youth learning, rural music programs and positive youth development.
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Enhancing the development of the Six ‘C’s through the practice of creative processes is discussed. The role of social atmosphere in music-based programs is emphasized, as well as the opportunity for flow experiences. The discussion concludes by addressing challenges for after-school programs in rural areas and outlines recommendations for further research and Fusion’s Music Program.

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Fusion: Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Life as a teenager in the western world is difficult as it demands managing expectations of adults while discovering one’s self (Erikson, 1968). This challenge is made harder for youth when the training and learning structures available no longer provide adequate scaffolding for teenagers to make a transition into adulthood (Corbett, 2013). Secondary education systems are highly constrained by curriculum and put the onus on teachers to provide mentorship while requiring them to teach content dense courses (L. Johnson, Zeni, Tanel, K. Johnson, & Tanel, 2013). In addition, currently North American elementary and secondary schools have student class sizes ranging from the mid-twenties to the low thirties (Zahoric, 1999). In the larger classrooms it may be difficult for teachers to adapt and accommodate to the learning and developmental needs of the students leading to a generalized instruction leaving the students with learning difficulties behind (Zahoric, 1999). During after-school hours’ teenagers may be left on their own as parents work days are longer than the school day (Christie, 2012; Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Halpern, 1999). This time creates a gap where both adult supervision and mentoring are missing for many youth. When parents arrive home, teens may seem to be living in a different world from them because of changes in social norms due to rapidly changing communication technologies (Stafford & Hillyer, 2012; Kaare, Brandtzæg, Heim, & Endestad, 2007). The changes in social engagement due to the development of Internet and communication technologies have created further gaps in experience between parents and youth causing greater challenges for youth (Stafford &
Hillyer, 2012; Kaare et al., 2007). Given this current lack of mentoring for youth, it is important to build new structures that will enable teenagers to successfully make the difficult transition from childhood to young adulthood.

Rural youth face a different set of challenges than youth located in urban areas. A general lack of services for youth located in rural areas in comparison to urban population lays additional stresses on teenagers in rural areas. Increasingly, small-town youth finding a place to be themselves may become exceedingly difficult (Christie, 2012). Lack of affordable public services, such as public transit, make it difficult for youth to travel to and from friends’ homes and local hangouts (Leyshon, 2008). A lack of available space to hangout may cause disputes to form when bored or uninvolved teenagers hangout on street corners or outside the shops downtown (Christie, 2012). Many youth feel that taunts and dares that lead to misbehaviour by a few reflects poorly on the rest (Christie, 2012). As the disputes between adults and teenagers become larger this stigma becomes prevalent as storeowners see the youth as troublemakers (Christie, 2012; Leyshon, 2008). The lack of activities and available safe havens for youth in rural areas leads to destructive behaviour, such as drug-use and unprotected sex, occurring as bored youth become antsy (Witherspoon & Ennett, 2011; Akers, Melvin, Corbie-Smith, 2011; Carson, Iannotti, Pickett, Janssen, 2011). Given the challenges the rural youth face it is important to develop systems that will help them find ways to thrive in an ever changing world.

In order to combat these challenges both governments and non-governmental organizations offer a variety of after-school programming (Halpern, 1999). Funding, availability of trained staff and lack of resources restricts many after-school programs and is responsible for some of the variation seen amongst these programs (Halpern, 1999;
Durlak et al., 2010). However local community voices are the main driving force behind after-school programs, leading to local variation amongst the programs (Halpern, 1999; Durlak et al., 2010). Specifically, many programs are funded on the basis of offering prevention of anti-social behaviour by: removing youth from the streets, providing academic help, tutoring and a monitored place with provisions to do homework. Conversely, other jurisdictions have started creating programming that are youth driven and directed towards providing developmental benefits to the youth (Durlak et al., 2010; Halpern, 1999) as recent studies have shown that youth driven programming help promote development of the skills and assets that teenagers need to thrive (Khan, 2012). By providing an engaging environment through provision of youth driven programming, after-school programs can have developmental benefits. They can do this through capacity building and provision of local learning and communication structures that reinforces positive community values and individual wellbeing, in four ways: 1) by providing physical space for preventive care; 2) through specific programming that develops skills in the youth; 3) by offering a place to be included without judgment through the provision of an enclave where stigma from adults and friends is intentionally minimized; and 4) by creating a space that nurtures the building of healthy relationships between teens and their friends, staff and mentors (Christie, 2012).

Many after-school programs for youth have incorporated in part or in whole the concepts put forth by various models proposed for positive youth development (PYD). The most commonly accepted model of PYD predicts that when youth systematically accumulate developmental assets, they become more resilient and ultimately develop the capacity to thrive (Benson, 2006; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Semsa, 2007). Bowers,
Li, Kiely, Brittian, J. V. Lerner and R. M. Lerner (2010) states that the assets fit into five categories known as the five C’s:

1) Competence: A positive view of one’s actions in the domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational.

2) Confidence: An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one’s global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs.

3) Connection: Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.

4) Character: Respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviour, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.

5) Caring: A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

Lerner et al. (2005) expanded on Bowers’ model to add a sixth ‘C’ - Contribution, which deals with both the plasticity of youth, and the specific dynamic of two-way relationships youth have with their external environments. Lerner et al. (2005) also postulates that as youth accumulate the six ‘C’s they learn to contribute in a positive way to their families and communities.
It is my contention that a seventh ‘C’, creativity, the ability to innovate while in a state of play or under stress, is an essential asset for positive youth development as it is necessary for the building of assets in all the other categories, especially confidence and character. For individuals the process and product of creation are important. The product of an individual’s creativity results in fulfillment and delight as the person experiences gratification (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008). These feelings ultimately lead to an increase in self-confidence and help build other essential assets (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The creativity is valued as an asset in the workforce as it ultimately leads to innovation, often creating greater efficiencies in the workplace. A more efficient workforce creates more profit for companies enabling them to grow and create more jobs (Rittenberg & Tregarthen, 2009). Creativity therefore enables youth to thrive on a personal level and in their future careers.

The process of creating something is fundamental when considering creativity as an asset. An important part of building both creativity and competence is the concept of ‘flow experiences’. As proposed by the psychologist and proponent of positive youth development, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991/2008), flow is an experience whereby a person, while performing an activity, enters a mental state of full emersion concomitant with a high degree of focus, awareness and enjoyment. The heightened awareness, enjoyment, energy and focus achieved while in the state of flow, in theory, creates avenues for enhancing the creative process, identity building and the creation of meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Sansom, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Community arts projects have been used around the world not only to support the arts but also to create strong community connections and nurture creativity (Bolden,
They offer benefits to participants and their communities such as: creating personal, social, economic and educational change; promoting cultural awareness and community engagement; building collective and personal identity; creating solidarity and establishing participants’ confidence in their artistic potential thanks to the mentoring provided by expert artists and musicians. (Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2003; Jones, 1988; Lowe, 2000; Lowe, 2001; Bolden et al., 2013).

**Statement of Research Problem**

For teenagers, the ability to enjoy life and develop their identity is an important step in successfully dealing with the challenges youth face as they transition into adulthood. After-school music programs provide an avenue for personal change by offering youth the opportunity to take risks and explore their identities. Current research into after-school music programs is predominately focused on urban areas in both developed countries and the developing world. Given that youth in small towns face different challenges from those in urban areas, more research is needed that focuses specifically on the effects that youth driven music programs in small towns have on positive youth development. The Fusion Activity and Technology Centre’s music program provides a unique opportunity to study this topic as a case study and elucidate the elements that promote positive youth development.

**The Case Study**

The proposed case study is The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre (Fusion) in Ingersoll, Ontario. Located in South Western Ontario, the town is roughly a fifteen-minute drive to London on highway 401. Ingersoll is classified as a small town
with an estimated population of 12,150. Ingersoll’s economic base is in manufacturing, processing and agriculture. Sales, services, trades and transport arise to support the community and the manufacturing sectors (Town of Ingersoll, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2007). Of the 12,150 living in Ingersoll approximately 1,600 are between the ages of ten and nineteen. There is currently one private school, one secondary school and three elementary schools for youth to attend. Excluding school-based programming, activities available to the youth in Ingersoll and the surrounding rural area include: minor hockey, soccer, baseball, private music lessons and figure skating. The facilities available to youth include an ice rink, a community centre, four baseball diamonds, an indoor swimming pool, two tennis courts, a curling rink, a creative arts centre, a lawn bowling facility, six community parks and a golf course (Town of Ingersoll, 2008).

In 2006, through municipal funding, an after school program, known as The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre (Fusion), was created in Ingersoll Ontario. The youth of Ingersoll face many problems, which include: 1) drugs (specifically marijuana, oxycodone and methyl-amphetamines), 2) teen pregnancy and; 3) local stigma against the youth population as hooligans (Christie, 2012; Khan, 2012; Stats Canada, 2007). By offering affordable programming and ‘hang out’ space for the youth of Ingersoll on a ‘drop-in’ basis, Fusion helps address the social problems while achieving developmental benefits for the youth (Christie, 2012; Khan, 2012). The programs include a skate park for skate-boarders, a cooking program, a fine arts studio, a computer lab, a radio production suite, an entrepreneur program, a fully equipped music studio and an equipped gymnasium to name some. Of particular interest to my research is the Music Program at Fusion. With access to a youth driven professional music studio and music
training located at Fusion, the youth have the opportunity to enjoy a unique musical experience that nurtures their sense of identity and builds upon the assets needed for youth to succeed as adults. They can enjoy the music creation through improvisation, composition, recording, music production and performance while building relationships with friends and mentors and taking new risks. It also offers an opportunity for youth to enter a ‘flow’ mental state through musical performance and production thus enhancing their experience of contribution and nurturing their creativity.

**Research Goal**

The goal of this research is to identify the impact upon youth as a result of their participation in Fusion’s music program and elucidate the elements that contribute to these outcomes.

**Research Objectives**

1) To identify if participation in Fusion’s music program fosters competence, confidence, connection, character, caring and creativity in the youth.

2) To identity the extent in which the youth in Fusion’s music program build both their personal sense of identity and meaning in their lives.

3) To explore the youth’s ‘flow’ experiences during their participation in Fusion’s music program.

4) To identify the extent in which the current pedagogical approaches, used by the current and past coordinators of the Fusion youth music program and the participants, are aiding
the development of the youth and staff members.

**Significance of Study**

By looking at music making programs as a support system for transitioning youth, this research contributes valuable information and reinforces concepts in the fields of psychology, education, capacity development, and music. This research contributes to the field of psychology by examining the role music plays as a vessel for meaning creation, identity building and positive youth development. Areas such as the efficacy of after school music programs and their ability to engage students in new types of learning are highlighted in this study. These areas have not been previously explored in-depth, including different types of learning that foster creativity in youth during their time in after-school programs. The addition of creativity as a core asset in positive youth development theory is significant as it enables educators, social workers and program directors to find new avenues to help youth thrive. This research adds valuable scope to musical pedagogy by stressing the development of positive character traits and the acquisition of assets necessary for the successful transition of youth to adulthood. The proposed research identifies critical components of music programs that foster the assets essential to development of youth. The research intends to develop questions and recommendations with regards to the development of youth in music programs in an effort to build understanding and knowledge of the processes involved in social change and development of youth in rural Ontario.

**Methodology**

**Case Study**
The research was a case study of Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre music program. Using case studies, researchers searched for new information, knowledge, and understandings so as to build theories explaining specific phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2011). There were numerous strengths to using case studies as a research method including: obtaining a depth of data not available through survey based research, the ability to create specific recommendations based on the data obtained and the methods used to obtain the data (Flyvbjerg, 2011). This is particularly true for research on programs such as Fusion and similar after-school programs directed at positive youth development. The major limitation of case studies is developing generalizations based on the data as it is intrinsically related to the specific nature of the cases studied and the methodology used to gather the data. Specifically, the researcher, instead of being an observer outside of the system being studied, becomes part of the study (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Using a case study the proposed research intends to explore, explain and analyze the role music plays in youth development through participation in the Fusion music-making program.

**The Location and Participants**

The study took place at Fusion’s music studio located in Ingersoll, Ontario. As a small, rural town it provides a unique opportunity to research the relationship between music creativity and social practice in a rural setting. The participants of the study were youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen years. The program’s coordinators, Fusion’s director and past participants took part in the study.
Data Collection

Data was collected from the following three sources: observation, interviews and validation focus groups. This array of collection methods created triangulated results, thereby creating greater validity (Hambly, 2012). A small number of intense interviews were used in this case study to increase depth of data. (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

1. Participant Observations.

Direct observations of the Fusions music program for two weeks were made in February and March of 2014. Field notes were taken during this time. After the initial observations, the researcher was integrated into the ‘performances’ as a participant, in order to build a deeper understanding of the experiences of the youth during music playing, composing, and recording. The researcher reflected on the ‘performances’ and conversations in the form of observatory journal. The integration took place during the months of March and April 2014.

2. Interviews.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted in February of 2014. Nine youth participants were interviewed. Participation was determined to be more than 6 months to qualify the youth for an interview as the questions are with regard to the programs impact on their development. The primary purpose of the interviews was to elicit participants’ perspectives on the outcomes, experiences, and structures that shape their participation at Fusion’s Music Program. Three semi-structured interviews with the past and present program staff members were conducted to build on the information provided by the participants, provide different perspectives on the effectiveness of the
program, and to further explore the experiences of the youth. All the interviews were 20-65 minutes in length, and were conducted in person or by Skype. All interviews were held on a volunteer basis. All the participants involved in the Fusion music program were offered the opportunity to be interviewed and participate in the research project provided they had been engaged in the program for a minimum of 6 months.

3. Validation Focus Group

One 45-minute focus group discussion was conducted with six participants in May 2014. The small group discussion was intended verify the findings in the interviews. As anticipated the discussion group format enabled participants to reflect, respond to and build on their peers’ ideas. The discussion also yielded data that is not accessed via the interviews. The participants reflected upon on their participation in the study during focus groups and further explored the research questions.

Data analysis

A qualitative analysis was conducted by coding and sorting the data collected through observations, field notes, interview transcripts, small group discussion transcripts and video elicitation (IPR), according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study (Stake, 2010). The assets framework with the addition of the concepts of creativity, flow and experiential learning was used as a conceptual framework, which informed the original themes during data analysis. The field notes and transcripts were read closely and repeatedly to identify emergent themes. Other themes were derived from the research questions and relevant literature. Additional themes emerged during data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Placing coloured stickers on the wall; notating the key words, time
of interview and the alphanumeric code on the sticker; and sorting the key words into themes by the colour of the sticker was used to code the data.

**Ethical Considerations**

In order to initiate research with human subjects the University of Guelph’s Research Ethics Board required the researcher to consider the ethical ramifications of the intended research. The current research accounted for ethical issues concerning consent, confidentiality and anonymity and adverse effects to personal well being of the participants. Given the negligible risk to the minor, participant consent was obtained when necessary from the minor but not from their guardians. A form indicating that the confidentiality of participants in this study was presented will be written. Given the small size of the program a guarantee of anonymity was not be possible. In understanding that interview questions may ask about high-risk behaviour confidentiality was guaranteed as so far it does not involve endangering another member of the community. To minimize adverse consequences of the study on participants and staff, the researchers respected the autonomy and dignity of all participants and planned an exit strategy that hopefully minimized the sense of loss experienced by the youth.
Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

The following is a review of the current literature describing the concepts and studies that aid our understanding of the effect music programs have in the daily lives of rural teenagers. A discussion of these subjects follows:

1) A contemporary conceptualization of youth
2) The challenges that youth are facing in rural areas
3) A description of learning theories relevant to youth and children
4) The theory of positive youth development
5) The impact of after-school programs on youth
6) The effect of music and arts based programs on teenagers
7) The concept of creativity imagined as an asset that aids the development of youth
8) A description of peoples’ experiences of flow during musical composing, music performance and listening to music

A Contemporary Conceptualization of Youth

The conceptualization of youth as a social construct has changed over the years (Lauzon, 2013). Throughout the 20th century, youth have been viewed as troublesome, either as a group of people who pose a problem for society or as a group of uncontrollable people bound to take undue risks (Dehi, 2003; Lauzon, 2013). Starting in the 1990s scholars found that the risk seeking behaviour that youth generally portray could be focused with passion, by providing engaging activities in the areas of sports and leisure, arts, and science (Dehi, 2003; Schmon, 2013; Lauzon, 2013). The change in attitude ultimately led to research in youth development from a perspective of learning
and engagement instead of one of prevention of harmful behaviours (Lauzon, 2013; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The age at which people are considered youth has changed over time as well. Today, persons aged 12-18 are generally categorized as youth. This categorization may no longer be precise in North American society but it has sustained in recent literature because it allows researchers to more easily conduct research on this age group, given that all teenagers between the ages 12-18 are still attending school (Cross, 2013). In some of the literature, it has been argued that the categorization of youth should encompass people up to the age of 25, as it now usually coincides with the departure of the person from their parent’s home (Bynner, 2005). It as also been observed that youth are entering the workforce on a more permanent basis later in life. Therefore, the entry into early adulthood has been delayed to approximately 25 years of age (Bynner, 2005; Cross, 2012). Entry into the classification of youth generally coincides with puberty at 12 years of age. However, it has been shown that with the early onset of sexual identity occurring before the age of 12 suggests a shrinking of the childhood term (Khan, 2012). An expansion of the age limits of youth from 12-18 to 12-25 has been observed in recent literature (Kahn, 2012). However, the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre limits the age of youth members from 12-18 years. Therefore, classical age limits of 12-18 were maintained for this study.

Adolescence is considered as a time of transition from childhood to adult-hood (Illeris, 2007). During this time, youth move from a dependent life to a life of relative independence. Through this transition to independence, youth are given increasing responsibilities that generally result in youth becoming a contributing member of society.
Therefore, during the period of adolescence, youth engage in a high degree of learning and exploration. Erik Erikson (1968), in knowledge of the developmental challenges facing youth, theorized that youth explore many different identities. He named this stage an ‘identity crisis’ or ‘Identity vs. Role Confusion’, which consists of youth testing several different types of adult roles to evaluate which of them best fit their personality and skills (Erikson, 1968). Youth stress the importance of building their relationships with their peers. During early adolescence, inclusion with peers is of utmost importance in the daily lives of youth (Christie, 2012). In later years, youth examine their future career possibilities by testing the job market to evaluate where their specific set of skills can be best put to use (Cross, 2012). Generally, the youth stage of development is characterized by youth exploring their potential role in society and discovering who they are as people (Erikson, 1968).

The Problems Youth Face Today

Living in an increasingly complex world

While building a sense of belonging and constructing a set of moral rules, young people live exceedingly complex lives (Smith et al., 2002). The complexity of their lives is exacerbated by the increased rate of change in society through ever-changing communications technology and social networking (Corbett, 2013; Lauzon, 2013). By constructing their own meaning and reflecting on their experiences, youth learn to adapt in an ever-changing environment (Smith et al., 2002, Corbett, 2013). Through this learning process, the construction of multiple positions, social relations, ethics, politics and kinship of their own accord creates a diversity of identities and feelings in youth (Khan, 2012). Therefore when examining youth it will be important to account for a wide
range of motivations, thoughts and feelings to properly describe the life of a particular subset of youth.

**Living as a marginalized group**

It is essential to note that youth are marginalized when their voiced opinions are not heard in the political or educational arenas. This is especially true when youth express their feelings to adults with decision-making power yet their opinions are ignored. Youth lack decision-making power in regards to many issues in their daily lives including: curriculum content and the number of hours spent at school. Adults will regularly and typically attempt to use “One Size Fits All” type of solutions for problems concerning youth (Khan, 2012). Youth who are greatly affected by this approach become angry, disengaged and often rebellious as they now consider parts of their lives irrelevant or needlessly stressful (Khan, 2012; Smith, et al. 2012).

Today, educational systems in the western world lack relevancy for youth in modern society further emphasizing the need for youth driven programs (Robinson, 2011). Perceived relevancy of the content of learning often leads to a passion for an activity as internal motivation is triggered (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010, Bahi, 2003). However, an activity that is perceived to be irrelevant provides no such motivation. In these cases, external motivators and expectations are applied from teachers and parents in the form of rewards and punishments. Rewards generally provide short-term gains for youth but these gains do not provide sustainable solutions as internal motivation is still lacking. Punishments are fear-based in nature and they tend to prevent creative behaviour as they associate risk with creativity as opposed to benefits (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Fear has additional downsides. For instance, fear is one of the greatest contributors
to stress in our daily life and it leads to subdued performance in daily tasks. Rebellious behaviour is another result of external motivators, as punishments may be perceived as unjust or unwarranted. The problems attributed to policy decisions regarding education may leave lasting impacts regarding future employment for youth in today’s society as disengaged learners will have difficulty finding a fulfilling career due to lack of skill and a propensity to be lazy (Carson et al., 2011). Given this, it can be argued that a failure of western educational systems has occurred. The systems are inadequate at finding solutions for youth in an increasing complex society. As such, youth-driven programming is needed (Robinson, 2011, Gore, 2007).

**Youth driven programming as a solution to marginalization**

Creating programming that engages youth in political and educational arenas will be challenging. Youth programming has become an essential part of creating a more inclusive society in which the youth feel they do not need to shy away from voicing their opinions, but can freely speak their minds. Creating opportunities for teenagers to learn, change, plan, and make decisions has begun in the form of youth membership at school boards, community committees and youth driven after-school programs (Khan, 2012; Gray, 2001; Jench, 2005; Taylor & Gooby, 1998). These programs encourage ownership and a sense of belonging in youth, helping create life-long learners that are needed to adapt to today’s changing society (Lauzon, 2013).

**Barriers to sustainable youth driven programming**

Building sustainability in youth driven programs will be challenging. There are major barriers to overcome in order to achieve integration of youth into the adult world. Three barriers will be discussed here, including: adult’s stigma of youth; youth workers
who value traditional practices; and limited resources invested in youth (Khan, 2012). First, youth are often stigmatized by adults as troublesome and rebellious (Shucksmith, 2004; Meek, 2008; Smith et al., 2002). This often prevents adequate communication between decision-makers and youth as a lack of respect for youth’s opinions and feelings, which results in decision-makers ignoring youth and their feelings or opinions. It allows prioritizing the concerns’ of adults over those of youth (Restuccia & Brundy, 2003; Khan, 2012). Second, traditional youth practitioners prevent youth engagement by promoting top-down solution-based programs often associated with specific problems such as drug abuse. These programs are often formulated with little youth involvement and pull resources from youth-driven programs. Finally, limited resources can hamper youth-driven programming initiatives, as qualified youth practitioners and funding are difficult to procure (Restuccia & Brundy, 2003; Khan, 2012).

The Challenges that Youth Face in Rural Areas

Youth who live in small towns in North America face specific challenges due to their social and economic limitations. These challenges manifest in four major ways: a lack of social activities that are affordable; stigma of the youth by the adults of the community; alcohol and drug use; and a lack of viable youth employment (Khan, 2012; TORC, 2007; Panelli, Nairn, & McCormack, 2002; Katz, 1998; Shucksmith, 2004; Meek, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). As these challenges are highly interconnected, it is difficult to approach the difficulties youth face in rural areas separately. However, in order to fully understand the issues, an explanation of each challenge is provided in this section.

In many small towns, there are few local meeting places and even fewer extra-curricular activities. For many communities extra-curricular activities tend to be provided
by the school in the form of sports, music and drama programs (Khan, 2012). However, school-run activities tend to be organized and are provided by the teachers and the curriculum. These activities are, for the most part, driven and derived by teachers (Johnson et al., 2012). These activities result in a lack of engagement from a segment of the youth who prefer self directed activities (Khan, 2012, Smith et al., 2002, Carson et al., 2011, Christie, 2012). In addition, organized sports, dance and music lessons can be very expensive. Therefore, only youth whose parents earn high income can afford to send their children to organized lessons. Furthermore, large sporting facilities are often difficult to access because of their distance from rural areas, high membership fees, and inadequate public transportation (TORC, 2007). For youth in rural areas, a lack of public space to hangout compounds the issue. Retailers are understandably concerned about youth loitering at the stores in small towns as it prevents access to the storefronts, and dissuades customers to enter the stores. Thus, students who opt out of school-based activities tend to be left to fend for themselves, commonly resulting in tension between youth and adult populations living in small towns.

Tension between youth and the adults in the community often leads to stigmatising of youth as troublemakers; a few youths’ unlawful behaviour taints adult perceptions of all the youth in the community (Shucksmith, 2004; Meek, 2008; Smith et al., 2002; Christie, 2012; Khan, 2012). Youth also tend to travel in large groups blocking store entryways when talking and on occasion fighting (Shucksmith, 2004; Meek, 2008; Smith et al., 2002). In a study performed by Christie (2012), stories were told of youth’s interactions with adults and the injustice the youth felt when the storeowners held an entire group responsible for an individual’s crime. For example, a youth told this story:
while in a group, one youth vandalized a storefront, thereby causing all the youth in the group to “get into trouble” (Christie, 2012). Youth who understood that one person could often ruin the reputation of the group were upset at the injustice of living with consequences of an act they did not commit (Christie, 2012).

Alcohol abuse and drug use is a common problem amongst youth in rural areas (Katz, 1998). For example, Oxford County has had numerous reports of illicit drug use notably methyl amphetamines more commonly known as crystal meth and oxycodone (Sun News Media, 2010; CBC, 2012). Failure to mitigate high-risk behaviour can be expensive both socially and economically as a lack of amenities for youth in rural areas was linked to increased drug use in a study conducted by Katz in 1998.

In rural areas, amenities for recreation should be relevant and engaging to youth (Panelli et al., 2002; TORC, 2007; Khan, 2012). In order to achieve this, rural communities must provide facilities for the activities that the youth have interest in performing and are affordable, such as skate parks, cinemas, clubs and sporting facilities. The provision of these facilities benefits youth by providing an escape from drugs and alcohol. In addition, these facilities can provide an atmosphere in which youth can learn new skills, build confidence and create positive relationships. A youth windsurfing centre (Bonaire Aqua-speed windsurfing club) on the island of Bonaire is an example of the benefits a sporting facility can have on youth even with little to no resources to run a performance-oriented youth training centre (Schmon, 2013). In the early 1990s a local fisherman and windsurfer Elvis Martinus introduced windsurfing to two brothers Elton “Taty” and Everon “Tonky” Frans. Given the brothers enthusiasm for the sport Elvis Martinus started a youth windsurfing centre in order to teach the brothers and
surrounding youth how to windsurf. Given that the Frans brothers and local youth were the sons of fisherman and of low economic status, the centre provided lessons, equipment, and transportation free of charge. Through windsurfing, these youth escaped drugs and local gangs and were able to gain confidence, create positive relationships with fellow youth windsurfers and build the necessary skills to become professional windsurfers. The Frans brothers and the youth participants at Bonaire Aqua-speed windsurfing club went on to become world-class professional windsurfers and transform the sport of windsurfing with their creativity by inventing many of the new freestyle moves now standard in windsurfing competitions (Schmon, 2013). As the case of Bonaire demonstrates, accessible and relevant recreational facilities have the potential to transform the lives of youth.

Out-migration of youth in rural communities is a major issue in Ontario (TORC, 2007). In order for youth to stay committed and connected to their community, youth need to value family and friends. In addition, youth need to be comfortable and content in their community (Jamieson, 2000; Khan, 2012). Building connections with family, friends and institutions is difficult for youth. Some of the reasons for this include higher education, which tends to be located in major urban centers; a lack of variable and engaging career choices in local communities; and, youth becoming ‘claustrophobic’ of the small town atmosphere leading to an urge to travel and experience new cultures (TORC, 2007; Khan, 2012; Lad, 2000).

A Summary of the theories of learning surrounding youth and children
A Brief History of the Learning Theories of the 20th century
During the early 20th century three contemporaries - John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori - changed the landscape of learning theories by describing how we learn from our environment and experience. These structures include a theory of learning that articulated experience and reflection as essential parts of the learning process, a testable hypothesis on the way the mind develops as a child, and the addition of guided self-discovery as a method of teaching (Illeris, 2007; Montessori, 1967; Piaget, 1958; Dewey, 1934). These theories and practices ensure sustained engagement in learning by providing meaningful youth-driven structures and curriculum.

John Dewey described a model of learning through experience in 1938. He described learning as cyclical, where humans learn from interacting with one’s environment, in the following order: an action or impulse, an observation of the consequences, the acquisition of knowledge, judgment based upon both the past and along with prediction of the future, and a better informed action. The cycle is repeated until a purposeful action is established through the dynamic interactions between observation, knowledge and action (Dewey, 1938). Dewey believed that the problem for educators lay in the delay between the observation and the judgment, as ‘the idea of consequences’ must meld with impulse in order to create a movement necessary for purposeful action (Dewey, 1938). Dewey argued that learning occurs by reflecting on past, present and possible future consequences of action (Kolb, 1984). In his theory, two concepts are stressed: interaction with the environment and importance of the experience to have consequences (Illeris, 2007; Dewey, 1938). Many contemporary scholars consider this theory to be the basis for later theories of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Illeris, 2007).
Even though Jean Piaget’s research was strictly with children, his investigations in cognitive development validated Dewey’s process of learning as well as reinforced the need for self-directed learning and self-discovery when developing one’s mind (Piaget, 1958). Piaget (1959) theorized that cognitive development is a process based on adaptation to the surrounding environment of the individual (Wadsworth, 2004; Piaget, 1959). For Piaget, this adaption to the surrounding environment by children is a form of cognitive learning and occurred in five stages: assimilation, equilibrium, disequilibrium, accommodation, and re-assimilation (Wadsworth, 2004; Piaget, 1959).

It should be noted that Piaget’s work has been criticized because it disregards the influence of culture and social context on learning (Burner 1966; Vygotsky, 1978; Open University, 1997). Bruner (1966) and Vygotsky (1978) stress the need for social interaction, tutelage, and scaffolding to guide children through their learning. They are concerned with how social interaction can influence a person, especially a youth’s learning. In the rapidly changing modern age, where these structures no longer exist for the vast majority of knowledge available, individuals must prioritize their learning and learn how to learn in order to adapt to the new social and cultural influences (Illetis, 2007).

During her time at an orphanage, Maria Montessori discovered how children learn from their environment (Montessori, 1967). Montessori (1967) observed how children, by being curious about their surroundings, asked questions relevant to their daily lives and future. She also observed children using materials to facilitate their learning. Armed with this knowledge, Maria Montessori created a schooling system that is centered around self-directed learning and the use of materials that enable children to learn by
engaging with their environment in both a productive and relevant manner (Montessori, 1967). By understanding learning as a process in which the learner builds a relationship with their surroundings, Montessori’s theories and practices have enabled educators to adapt the environment to support the learner (Montessori, 1967).

A Comprehensive Theory of Learning and Defining Experiential Learning

David Kolb (1984), while synthesizing the works of Dewey (1938) and Piaget (1959), defined experiential learning as the process in which “we create knowledge through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Kolb stressed that learning is a process in which people or organizations interact with their environment and is not merely an outcome (Kolb, 1984). In believing that this definition is too broad, Illeris (2007) created a definition of experiential learning that differentiates experiential learning from other forms of learning. Illeris (2007) defines experiential learning as:

Learning in which the learning dimensions of content, incentive [motivation], and interaction [social and environmental influences] are involved in a subjectively balanced and substantial way.

In 2003, Illeris also articulated a more comprehensive theory of learning, which includes cognitive, social and emotional dimensions. In his book, Illeris describes four different types of cognitive leaning: cumulative, assimilative, accommodative, and transformative. Cumulative learning is a formation of something new (a novel concept, categorization solution or idea) in an isolated setting and occurs when no context or meaning is associated with the learning. This process occurs commonly when toddlers and young children are experiencing the world around them for the first time. It is rare as adults but occurs when we are experiencing a new culture or circumstance where no prior or background knowledge exists. Assimilative learning is the addition of something new
to an existing pattern or schema. Accommodative learning occurs through the separation and splicing of a schema to allow for a grafting of a new pattern. Transformative learning occurs through the modification of a personality so that a person learns to behave differently in certain circumstances and occurs often as a result of a crisis (Illeris, 2003a, 2003b).

Learning is also linked to motivation and emotions by external factors such as culture and social interaction (Illeris, 2003a, 2007; Damasio, 1994). Antonio Damasio (1994) indicated that even though motivation, emotion, and learning work separately in the adult brain, they work in conjunction with one another (Illeris, 2003a, 2007; Damasio, 1994). Illeris (2007) also considers the moments when learning is blocked, the occasions when we learn more effectively, and when we learn something unintentionally. He implies that the environment in which we learn is greatly related to these instances and hypothesizes that the creation of optimal learning environments, which include self-directed and student-centered activities, are needed in order to achieve optimal learning outcomes. He states that self-directed learning is especially important when total trust in the educator is diminished (Illeris, 2007).

How do youth learn?

Given that our teenage years are a time of transition from childhood into adulthood, Illeris (2003b) formulated a theory of learning for youth that includes aspects of adult and child learning. The major aspect of learning as youth is the act of taking responsibility for our learning. Taking responsibility for our learning implies a prioritization of the concepts we intend to learn and experiences we intend to learn from, while developing our own sense of personal identity. Juggling these responsibilities in
today’s society is challenging. Firstly, the learning environment for youth is extremely chaotic (Illeris, 2003b). Due to advances in information technology and social media, the amount of information available to youth is large. The wealth of information forces youth to make decisions regarding the relevant content they need to learn early on in their development (Illeris, 2003b). Secondly, the learner’s trust in the educator is significantly reduced as the youth are encouraged to think critically (Illeris, 2003b). Learning in adolescence, therefore, becomes more self-directed than in childhood. Finally, during the learning process youth encounters contradictory situations. This is especially prevalent when considering the role of identity building in a rapidly changing society (Illeris, 2003b). For this reason Illeris (2003b) also included the concept of identity development in his theory of learning. Illeris (2003b) postulates that youth must conform to societal expectations and become contributing members of their communities by acquiring the skills necessary to achieve employment. At the same time, youth discover their place in the world and find meaning in their lives. Through exploring the world’s cultures, knowledge and philosophies, youth learn how to make decisions more effectively by developing the capacities of meta-cognition, critical thought and reflection. The successful entry into adulthood is therefore a challenging time in terms of learning and identity building (Illeris, 2003b, 2007).

The Theory of Positive Youth Development

In the mid 1990s, positive youth development emerged from the field of positive psychology, as a response to the diagnostic and problem-solving approach that dominated the field of psychology. Positive psychology emphasizes the subjective experiences of
“well-being, contentment and satisfaction in the past, hope and optimism for the future and flow, and happiness in the present” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

This statement speaks not of the prevention of emotional turmoil but the creation of tranquility of mind, body and soul in individuals. This philosophy was translated into the positive youth development movement through works of prominent youth psychologists. Positive youth development is a shift away from a preventative approach towards an approach that is encouraging. The traditional approach focuses on specific problems such as drug abuse or youth crimes; whereas, positive youth development encourages personal asset development in all youth (Khan, 2012; Restuccia & Brundy, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The theory argues that through the development of key assets, a youth becomes better prepared for adult life, thereby enabling the person to successfully navigate adulthood (Benson et al., 2006; Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Rolden, 2007; Lerner et al., 2002; Lauzon, 2013). The proponents of positive youth development argue that an effective transition into adulthood creates people who are productive and responsible members for themselves, their families, and society (Benson, 2002).

Positive Youth Development is founded on two concepts: building resiliency in youth and creating the capacities in youth that enables youth to thrive. According to Krovetz (1999), resiliency has multiple dimensions including: The development of positive interpersonal skills; competence in problem solving and self-advocacy; a sense of one’s own identity and a freedom to choose and a sense of purpose for the future.

Often thought of as a trait that mitigates the effect of adverse events, resiliency also enables a person to navigate the normal struggles and the highs of life. Lerner et al.,
(2002) expanded PYD to include the building of assets in youth that allow them to thrive in later life. Thriving youth extend their locus of concern from themselves to their family and community members (Lerner et al., 2002). This shift from self-interest to other-interest is an essential step in becoming engaged with one’s community and developing the ability to act for social change. Positive youth development thus has the capability of guiding individuals to become capable of responding to a crisis properly while thriving on the challenge (Edwards, 2007; Park, 2004).

As stated in Chapter 1, Lerner et al. (2005) states that the assets needed for successful navigation of adulthood fit into five categories known as the five C’s. These are:

1) **Competence:** A positive view of one’s actions in the domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational.

2) **Confidence:** An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one’s global self-regard, as opposed to domain-specific beliefs.

3) **Connection:** Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bi-directional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.

4) **Character:** Respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviour, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.
5) **Caring:** A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

A sixth C, contribution, has been added through both theoretical and empirical arguments in order to account for youth’s accountability to their own communities (Lerner et al., 2005). The authors argue that youth who are more adept at contributing to their community have a higher probability to succeed in their lives. Lerner et al. (2005) theorized that an increase in “contribution to community” encourages youth to thrive by building assets that enable youth to adapt to their ecological and contextual realities more effectively. The relationship between a youth’s contribution to society and their participation in afterschool programs was low. However, a significantly positive relationship between a youth’s contribution to society and positive youth development was found (Lerner et al., 2005). These confounding results lead Lerner et al. (2005) to postulate that the abilities of individuals to contribute to their community are constrained by age and other external factors, such as lack of access to self-transportation. Given that access to self-transportation and a person’s age can create barriers that prevent youth from participating in adult society this explanation is highly possible. In their belief that community-based youth programs increase the opportunities available to young people to participate in community activities, Lerner et al. (2005) studied a group of fifth graders. This study revealed that participation in youth programs was independent of positive youth development. This puzzled the researchers who then proposed that the problem with the study was with age of subjects. They theorized that the participants were too young to benefit from community participation, as they would not have developed the
necessary capacities to benefit from said community involvement (Lerner et al., 2005; Werner, 1957).

In the same study, Lerner et al. (2005) tested the five C model predictability of positive youth development and found positive correlations of all five Cs to positive youth development. Lower p-values were found for caring compared to the other components of the five C model. The article stated that caring was not a developed concept, therefore caring lacked precision lowering the ability of the study to measure the relationship between positive youth development and the asset of caring. Given the restraints of the survey, Lerner et al. (2005), postulated that a different approach was needed to achieve higher correlations between the Five C’s and positive youth development. The authors stated that data collection methods that rely on self-report might lead to imprecision in psychological studies, especially among youth (Learner et al., 2005). Given the variance in quantitative studies regarding positive youth development, I propose that sustained participant observation and a qualitative methodology is needed in order to delineate a deeper understanding of the patterns observed between the Five C model and the afterschool programs.

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) list personal traits that exist within individuals and among groups who experience success. Three of these traits included in the list are an aesthetic sensibility, future mindedness and originality, which all appear to be missing from the Five C model. It is my contention that the Five C model, rooted in its origins of positive psychology, needs to include an additional “C” for creativity to capture these traits. Creativity is the ‘making’ of something that is new and of value (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). The development of imagination is imperative to this
process as it builds an avenue for novel ideas and solutions to be nurtured through dream-like thought processes (Greene, 2008, Sawyer et al., 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The development of critical judgment and reflection on the beauty or usefulness of the novel creation is the final aspect needed for creativity.

To be most effective, positive youth development must be a community effort. This includes the youth’s families and social networks, learning initiatives (most notably schools and after school programs), community-based programs, spiritual organizations and the youth’s peer groups (Benson, 2002; Granger, 2002). Meeting with youth as partners in community initiatives is essential as it increases youth engagement and does not marginalize them or their ideas (Edwards et al., 2007). The increased ownership youth feel when working as partners with adults will help sustain youth-driven projects, increasing the benefits of the programs for present and future youth. Sustained program funding and community involvement enables youth workers to be innovative in their programming, further benefiting youth with a wide variety of activities. This is particularly evident at Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, where a variety programs have developmental benefits for youth (Khan, 2012).

The Benefits of Afterschool Programs on Youth

Despite the use of techniques and methodologies grounded in the work of learning theorists, many teachers are unable to create a classroom that engages youth in learning in today’s education system (Robinson, 2011; Greene, 2005). Top-down learning structures dominate education in North American schools (Robinson, 2011). These structures increase youth disengagement at school, which exacerbates the problems in education as curriculums are not relevant to most youth nor are they youth-driven. The
state of modern education is mostly derived from the need to provide skilled labour in an industrial world. The education system is highly skewed towards the production of professionals such as: doctors, lawyers and teachers. At the end-point of western education is a research-based professor (Robinson, 2011). It is evident that given the change society is undergoing, the majority of education systems in the western world have become out-dated in a world dominated by information technology (Robinson, 2011). However, afterschool programs, not being as restricted by curriculum demands or as pressured by outside lobbyists, can offer a different structure that allows youth to learn life skills in a more appropriate and fun way.

Afterschool programs offer a unique ability to provide an opportunity for experiential learning. With a flexible curriculum that allows for student-driven learning exercises, projects and evaluation, an adolescent has the ability to explore aspects of their lives that are not usually found in public schools. Through the opportunities offered at afterschool programs youth learn new skills and often manifest self-confidence, self-advocacy, and eventually the advocacy for others as a result (Lerner, 2002). The benefits of afterschool programs are achieved through instruction, relationship building and role modeling by the program coordinators. Also, by understanding that giving youth choice of learning methods is imperative to building a sense of empowerment in teens. Choice also provides space that enables the students to discover new ways of learning and allows teenagers to examine how they learn best (Montessori, 1967; Benson, 2002). The structures afterschool programs may offer include mentorship from peers, volunteers and program leaders, recreational facilities for sports and games, an inclusive space to socialize or ‘hangout’ with friends along with instruction and space to practice art, music
and dance (Lerner et al., 2002; Christie, 2012; Khan, 2012). These structures enable youth to discover their potential and the potential of becoming lifelong learners (Lauzon, 2013).
The impact of music and arts-based programs on teenagers

Research has identified that community arts projects can benefit participants and communities in a variety of ways (Bolden, 2013). Community arts projects can be vehicles for personal, social, economic, and educational change (Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2003). These projects promote cultural awareness and community engagement (Jones, 1988). By facilitating intergenerational relationships, community art projects provide youth with a vehicle for communication with adults leading to enhanced well-being (Varvarigou, Creech, Hallam, & McQueen, 2011). Establishing collective identity and solidarity, arts projects help build ownership in their community, thereby creating the community assets needed for healthy and sustainable community life (Lowe, 2000). Another benefit of community arts projects is the raising of the participants’ confidence in their personal artistic potential by the teachings provided by the expert artists (Lowe, 2001). Additionally, when participants interact with an expert artist a boost of confidence occurs through a process of legitimization.

Recent research has focused on the impact that music making initiatives have on personal growth (Hallam, 2010). A study performed by Susan Hallam (2010) showed that music making processes enhance the development of “literacy, numeracy, measures of intelligence, general attainment, creativity, fine motor co-ordination, concentration, self-confidence, emotional sensitivity, social skills, team work, [and] self-discipline” (Hallam, 2010, p. 1). However, the study also reported that the experience must be “enjoyable” (Hallam, 2010, p. 1) for the social and personal benefits to arise in youth. This implies that the social environment is critical to the musician’s improvement in music and to their personal development. This finding was corroborated by Creech & Hallam (2011) in a
study of school-aged participants. It was found that a positive relationship between pupil and teacher was essential to creating positive development in the youth.

The music making process is the process of creating music and includes: improvisation, composition and production. It provides an individual with opportunity to build intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (Karlson, 2011). Composition and production lead to a final product that may contribute to a sense of accomplishment, which would naturally create a boost in confidence in the individual or the group. Self-confidence is the first step in developing into a thriving individual (Lerner et al., 2002). The process of music making in a group setting, forces communication between the musicians or members of the group (Heble et al., 2013). This process enables individuals to start or continue to learn how to build relationships with other people with whom they share similar interests. By building these relationships inside a space that encourages positive development, a youth can explore their identity (Karlson, 2011). This is also achieved through the encouragement of self-expression. Although not as explicit as in art or storytelling, composition offers individuals the ability to express emotion or learn how to cope with multiple emotions at once. This type of expression can be particularly empowering as it allows for ownership of a person’s own feelings and in some cases the articulation of an abuse of power by an authority figure (Karlson, 2009; Jorgensen, 2007).

Group improvisation is of particular interest as the process is an implicit act of consensus. In its peek form, musicians work together to create not only something new but also a singular musical piece (Heble, 2000). Although the piece often sounds chaotic at first, there is implicit agreement upon throughout the process. By working together and learning from each other, the musicians learn to improve the sound and coherency of the
music. Listening to others, melding a sound and awareness of rhythm are essential to the process (Heble, 2000). Momentary awareness and attention are also important for the success of the improvisational session (Sansom, 2007; Heble, 2000). This process results in the building of identity (Sansom, 2007). These skills may become transferable into non-musical settings but require proper guidance to be realized. Improvisation also leads to a sense of communal accomplishment and the building of friendships. This creates a sense of camaraderie amongst musicians (Karlson, 2011). Social change is therefore emergent through both the process of music making and expression.

**The concept of creativity as an essential component of positive development of youth**

Given the wide variety of definitions of creativity in the literature, I will keep my definition simple and broad: the action and product of generating something new (novel) and of value (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Although extremely broad, this definition encapsulates the concepts that allow for the study of how creativity is fostered in youth.

Fostering imagination is essential in developing creativity in individuals. Maxine Greene (2000), an educational philosopher, calls for the inclusion of imagination and art in the school curriculum. Greene argues that arts provoke us to look beyond, imagine, and appreciate aesthetics. She says:

> It is not that the artist offers solutions or gives directions. He nudges; he renders us uneasy; he makes us (if we are lucky) see what we would not have seen without him (Greene, 2000, p. 276).

When we look beyond or see what we have not seen before, we discover something new. This discovery motivates us to create or generate what we now understand into a product that inspires others by its beauty or enables us to use the product in a new fashion. Through that uneasy feeling, created by the artist, we learn to be more than what we were
before (Greene, 2000). This, I believe to be the influence imagination has, it inspires. Corroborated in a study by Jeffery (2006) where he found that creativity is characterized by intrinsic motivation, defined as an impulse to create for enjoyment, challenge, or interest (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010), imagination and critique of the generated product and the creative process. He also found that through this process young people built meaningful educational identities (Jeffery, 2008).

Jeffery (2006) employed creative learning to study youth and children. Through creative learning, which is a project-based teaching methodology that involves the learner being part of all the lessons - from content selection to evaluation, Jeffery (2006) discovered the characteristics that are needed for youth to develop their creativity. The characteristics include: using the learners experience and imagination in the creation of something novel, activating the learner in multiple activities, and reviewing both the product and the process of generation of the idea into something substantial (Jeffery, 2006). The author concluded that for the learner to engage in and benefit from creative learning, the learning activities need to be relevant, the learner must have control and ownership over the learning process, and product and the project must have an innovative aspect.

The social environment can greatly affect a person’s creativity (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Extrinsic motivation usually constrains creativity. Expected rewards, surveillance, external evaluation, restricted choice and competition generally interfere with intrinsic motivation thereby, negatively effecting the development of creativity. This was found to affect people in all stages of life (Amabile, 1996; Hennessey, 1998).
Therefore, for creativity to be nurtured in youth, extrinsic motivators should be minimized to see optimal results.

**How musicians experience “flow” during performance**

The mental state of “flow” is an optimum experience. Flow is characterized by a heightened awareness of the information that is congruent with an individual’s goals and aspirations, a euphoric happiness, an intense focus on the activity the person is doing in the moment, and a general sense of order (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008). This experience has been reported by many athletes, musicians and other professionals during participation in their favoured activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008). The key to inducing this mental state is to engage in an activity so completely that all focus and awareness is captured within the scope of the activity. Additionally, the challenge has to match the person’s skill level for the activity to engage the necessary focus for flow to occur but not bore or frustrate the person, which would lead to a distracted or a despondent state preventing flow. This relationship is positive as the greater a person’s skill set, the greater the challenge must be (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008).

Even though the reports of flow states induced by music composing, performing and listening are sparse, three studies have shown the relationship between musical activities and flow (Bernard, 2009; Diaz, 2013; Wrigley & Emmerson, 2013). Bernard (2009) explored the relationships between flow and music making experiences. Through a narrative methodology, the author illuminated the experiences of university students’ flow states during music making. Given the meaning that the students attached to these powerful experiences, the author concluded that building a deeper knowledge base of the relationship between flow and music making would help further music education.
(Bernard, 2009). Diaz (2013) studied the effect of flow experience during music listening. Using a continuous response digital interface and a questionnaire, Diaz (2013) revealed that university students experience a heightened attention, focus and positive experience. However, given that the results of the effect flow has on the students while listening to music were interacting highly with other factors such as aesthetic response and mindfulness induction, the author found it difficult to conclude anything other than further speculating on the reasons for the integration of these findings. Wrigley & Emmerson (2013) studied the occurrence of flow states in high-school students performing live music. Using a standardized test designed to detect flow states the researchers found that the students rarely entered flow states while performing. It was concluded that the high level of challenge, the prevalence of ‘performance anxiety’, and nature of live performance prevented flow state from occurring. However, under the influence of different environmental factors, such as music style and decreased expectation, flow states may occur more frequently. These three studies demonstrate that flow states in musical performance, composing and listening are extremely complex relying on the skill, confidence and mental state of the participants’ (Bernard, 2009; Diaz, 2013; Wrigley & Emmerson, 2013).
Conceptual Framework

This diagram depicts the method that was used to ascertain the impact of Fusion’s Music Program on the youth in Ingersoll. The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre supports the development of assets in youth through learning structures that are experiential and youth driven (B. Khan, 2014; Christie, 2012; B. Khan, 2012). The afterschool program enables the staff of Fusion to use learning methods with the intention of facilitating the development of rural youth by asking the youth what they would like to do and learn while at Fusion (Khan, 2014). Situated inside Fusion is a unique music program, which gives youth the opportunity to: learn popular music; improvise music within a group setting; develop social acumen; and engage in flow (Heble, 2000; Newman et al., 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008).

In order to ascertain the developmental impacts on the youth of their participation in Fusion’s Music Program, the ‘Five C Model’ (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring) constructed by prominent psychologists in the field of positive physiology, was used (Lerner et al., 2005; Bowers et al., 2010; Benson, 2002). For
purposes outlines by Lerner et al. (2005) the “C” of Competence was added to the model. Given the importance of creativity to the art form of music and the daily lives of youth a seventh “C”, Creativity, was explored as well (Sansom, 2007; Greene, 2000, 2005; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). The development ascertained in the youth is intended to inform: the staff and managers of Fusion; music education research; learning and positive youth development theory.

**Summary**

By examining the current theories and ideas in the fields of positive psychology, education, music, and capacity development, this chapter reviewed the literature surrounding the role Fusion’s Music Program plays in the daily lives of participants. A description of the living conditions for youth, challenges youth face, and what it means to be a youth living in rural Ontario provided a valuable understanding of the backdrop surrounding Fusion’s music program. A description of experiential learning theories, positive development theory, and the effect after-school programming for youth, revealed the effects of youth driven after-school programming. Furthermore, the descriptions of the concept of creativity imagined as an asset that aids the development of youth, the impact arts based programming, and the experiences flow states during musical activities, provided a basis for further exploration of the effect music programs have on today’s rural youth. This literature review in conjunction of the research already performed at Fusion see Chapter 3) provided the information needed to create a conceptual framework (see Chapter 4) used in the analysis of the data collected for the case study of the Fusion Music Program.
Chapter 3: Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre

Introduction

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre (Fusion) is an afterschool program offered to the youth of Ingersoll for a five-dollar yearly fee. The Centre’s programming is youth driven (Khan, 2014). In order to provide an engaging and inclusive environment through the provision of extra curricular activities for the youth of Ingersoll, the municipality formed a youth centre now known as the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre (Fusion, 2010). Currently the Centre provides several services. Fusion’s programs serve many purposes as they help provide an avenue where youth are able to avoid high-risk behaviours, build relationships, develop skills and contribute to their community. The recreational programming includes: a skate park, a cooking program, a fine arts studio, a computer laboratory, computer programming training, a radio production suite, an entrepreneurial program, an equipped gymnasium and a music program boasting a professional style recording studio. Of particular interest for this study is the Music Program at Fusion. It provides a fully equipped music studio providing free music lessons, jam sessions, and experience in the recording and production of music. Program leaders, who provide guidance and instruction to the youth, supervise the activities at the music studio.

The Impact of Fusion on the youth of Ingersoll
The instruction and guidance from program leaders at Fusion reaches across the vast majority of programming options provided (Khan, 2014). The Fusion Centre has become a fascinating example of an intervention that facilitates youth development through focusing on experiential learning and positive youth development that has produced several positive outcomes (Khan, 2012). These include the building of advocacy, self-confidence and relationships among the youth (Christie, 2012).

The origin and theories of experiential learning, and positive youth development are critically important to understanding how Fusion intends to create social change in the community of Ingersoll. By building an inclusive after-school program that applies the theories of experiential learning through diverse, youth driven and voluntary programming Fusion allows the youth to explore their interests. The inclusive atmosphere in the centre enables youth to build positive relationships amongst both the other youth and the staff members. It has been reported that the youth do not create cliques at Fusion but instead converse with all members as comrades (Christie, 2012). Cliques often reinforce class regimes and therefore create inequities amongst the youth as members struggle for favours from the powerful (teachers and adults) (Christie, 2012). Breaking down this social construct is therefore important when encouraging equitable relationship among youth (Christie, 2012).

**The Music Program**

Fusion programming is youth driven. The youth at Fusion identify their needs, then plan, prepare, apply projects to address these needs and then reflect on their projects (Khan, 2012). This was particularly evident in the creation of a professional music studio at Fusion. Youth approached the coordinators to build a music studio. The youth were
then encouraged to think big to help create a professional music studio for the youth to enjoy the full range of popular music. The studio is utilized for both professional musicians and the youth members of Fusion exposing the youth to the production, recording and performance of music (Fusion, 2010). The building of the music studio provided youth with experiential learning opportunities unique to these types of after school programs. By empowering youth in this manner, the community of Ingersoll hoped to create more engaged youth, thereby fostering a sense of community in Ingersoll (Town of Ingersoll, 2007). Participation in programming at Fusion is voluntary. Voluntary structured activities enable youth to build both ownership of the project and create a structure for students to plan, prepare, execute and reflect (Lerner, 2002). As discussed above, this approach allows for learning from experience to occur. A personal sense of ownership to the activities may ensure sustainability, which is evident at Fusion. For example, for the past few years the members of Fusion have collaborated to create a haunted house (Fusion, 2008). The planning and preparation of the Haunted House is extensive. During the month of October the members decide on a theme, plan, and prepare a set, make-up, costumes and props. The haunted house is then opened to the public. Throughout this process, youth learn the competencies necessary to execute this sort of project. Through both the success and failures of this project, youth gain valuable insight and experience. This type of programming has resulted in valuable development of the youth in the areas of “Identity Work, Basic Skills, Positive Relationships, and Team Work and Social Skills” (Khan, 2012). Building these assets through their learning involvement in programming at Fusion, youth increase their ability to thrive and build resiliency (Khan, 2014).
Other Impacts of Fusion

Fusion, as an after school program, also provides services of prevention. Given the large amount of time youth remain unsupervised between when they get home from school and time in which their parents get home from work and the youths inability to find adequate places to ‘hang-out’ in the town, programs like Fusion provide safe places for youth to avoid seedier sides of small towns. Youth at Fusion have reported that at Fusion the lack of peer pressure and the rules of the centre allow them not to worry about pressure to do drugs and vandalize (Christie, 2012). This indicates that the youth in Ingersoll are using Fusion as a safe haven, somewhere they can relax without worrying about peer pressure and bad behaviour (Christie, 2012; Khan, 2012). The provision of this space is essential for youth to commune and prevents them from getting into trouble.

Through mentoring, Fusion also offers scaffolding for youth to transition into adulthood. It has been noted that the role of mentoring is a factor in determining youth’s participation at Fusion (Christie, 2012). Conversations with youth have revealed a high degree of respect for the coordinator of the fine arts studio at Fusion (Christie, 2012). This indicates that participation in these programs is also linked to the relationship the youth have with the staff or mentors at Fusion. Further research is needed in this area to discover the extent of the importance of mentorship at Fusion.

Participation at Fusion has also been linked to an increase in health and wellbeing (Cross, 2012). Outcomes related to youth health and well being included “reduced stress, staying positive, feeling accepted, engaging in physical activity, learning to have goals, building skills, making healthy choices, and reducing the need for risk-taking behaviours” (Cross, 2012:1). An increase in health and wellbeing has obvious benefits
that include an increased decision-making ability, which is an essential for youth to thrive.

**Summary**

Fusion, as an afterschool program, provides youth driven activities as well as providing an inclusive place to socialize, creating multiple benefits for the youth. The benefits include increased health and wellbeing, an inclusive social environment for youth to hang out, multiple learning opportunities and asset development. The music program, like some of the other programs, offers them the ability to learn music, develop essential assets, find meaning and explore their identity.
Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter provides an in-depth description of the methodology of this study. The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre’s Music Program is utilized as a case study to examine the impact of the Music Program on the youth participants.

This chapter defines qualitative inquiry and a rationale for its use in this thesis is presented. Then it goes on to describe the use of case studies in research methodology and Fusion’s Music as a case study. Finally, methodological challenges associated with studying youth, the procedures used to collect the data for the study, and the processes used in the analysis of the data are outlined.

Qualitative Inquiry

In 2011, Fredrick Erikson defined qualitative inquiry as an effort that:

Seeks to discover and describe in narrative reporting what people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning – relevant kinds of things in this world – kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests – focusing on difference in forms of things that make for a difference in meaning (p. 43)

Erikson (2011) continues to describe the kinds of questions that qualitative researchers ask when applying this practice, including: asking questions about people’s orientations to the experiences, symbols and materials in their daily lives. The description of the context of the individuals’ lives then enables the researcher and participants to place meaning on the artifacts under study. These artifacts include materials, symbols and metaphors, people, actions, beliefs, and interests that bring meaning to the daily lives of people. Erikson (2011) argues that by focusing on the differences inherent in the artifacts, we build an understanding of what life is to us.
Qualitative inquiry is concerned with the depth of understanding of the data under specific contexts (Denzin & Lincon, 2011). By delving deeply, qualitative methodologies enable researchers to see patterns that are not necessarily expressed using counts and statistical tests like quantitative data analysis. Qualitative researchers use patterns expressed in narrative form as a basis of their studies. By using narrative within qualitative inquiry the researcher tells a more in-depth story than numbers expressed in quantitative studies (Erikson, 2011).

The use of qualitative inquiry in conjunction with a case study of the Music Program at Fusion enables a depth of understanding of patterns and developmental impacts that are attributed to the music program. The narratives of the youth and program leaders at Fusion’s Music Program enables the researcher to discover the patterns that lead to the developmental impact on youth and the other structures that aid the youth at Fusion in their daily lives.

**Using Case Studies as a Research Methodology**

I chose to use a case study approach to research the impact of Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre’s Music Program on its youth participants. A case study is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2015) as: “an intensive analysis of an individual unit (a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to its environment.”

Flyvbjerg (2011) describes how the above-mentioned working definition of case studies is particularly useful by suggesting how a researcher should go about completing his or her investigations. Firstly, it uses the word intensive, which implies the use of methodologies that examine the unit being studied in a manner that is total. The word
individual necessitates that the inquiry is bounded in scope to a single unit. By stating developmental factors it implies that the research measures a change that is bounded within the single unit over a time period. Finally, the use of the phrase in relation to its environment implies that the analysis must be placed in a specific context of the unit of analysis. Thus, case studies seek to describe and discover specific phenomena in the world by searching for new information, knowledge, and understandings in context-specific situations (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

In addition, by obtaining a depth of data that is not available through survey-based research, new patterns may be found. The depth of analysis allows researchers to examine concepts that are not measured well by conventional statistical methods, such as relationships and motivations. By creating specific recommendations based on the context of the single unit of measure, case studies become powerful tools for practitioners and consultants to use to solve problems (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

**The Case Study: Fusion’s Music Program**

This research project used the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre’s Music Program, located in Ingersoll, Ontario, as a case study. Fusion’s Music Program provided an opportunity to research the relationship between an afterschool Music Program and the development of youth through social interaction and active music learning. Youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old and the Program leaders and a past program leader participated in the study.

The Music Program at Fusion started in 2009. Youth have the opportunity to develop social and musical skills through participation in this program (Fusion, 2010). The program now offers an array of musical activities with an emphasis on education in
popular music. Youth are offered music lessons in: guitar, electric bass, drums, piano and voice. They have access to a listening booth that enables exploration of popular music. An open music hall provides a space for instrumental music practice and improvisation. Another booth is made available for youth to record vocals. Finally, the Music Program at Fusion provides access to a full suite of music production. A multi-purpose music studio allows youth to experience studio recording, editing, mixing, and other production activities. By collaborating with other media programs within Fusion, the Music Program offers a rich variety of media activities such as music video production and music composition for video games.

All activities are youth driven and directed. This adds to the youth’s feelings of ownership and relevance (Fusion, 2010). The Music Program originated after the participants expressed the desire to start a music studio. The youth at Fusion originally wanted a small studio with access to instruments and a computer to record their sessions. The youth members at Fusion helped formulate a proposal to create a professional style studio with a digital sound mixing board, vocal booth, and practice room or jam hall, all sound proofed so that the recorded sound is free of interference from the environmental sounds of the Centre.

The Music Program is suited for research using a case study design for three main reasons. First, the presence of a Music Program like Fusion’s in a rural setting is a phenomenon. It is rare for youth to have access to production, composition, and performance parts of music making. Second, the context-specific learning that occurs in the Music Program emulates that of a case study method in that the program’s nature allows the youth to learn to become experts or virtuosos (Bourdieu, 1987; Flyvbjerg,
Finally, the Music Program provides adequate boundaries as the physical space at the studio allows youth to better conceptualize the Program. This geographical boundary allows youth to separate experiences at Fusion’s Music Program from the external environment, enabling the researcher to study a specific location’s effects.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected using three methods: participant observation, interviews and a validation focus group. In order to verify the information collected from the research participants, the data was triangulated by comparing the data collected through the above procedures (Hambly-Odame, 2012). The three methods will be discussed in detail below.

**Participant Observation**

Observation often provides the basis of qualitative research (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 1994; Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). Classic observation techniques have searched for objective truth through unobtrusive observation. However, over the last half-century, observational research has changed from its classic form to a research methodology that places the researcher in collaboration with the participants of the study (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). This change has many consequences when formulating a plan to collect data through observation. A contemporary view in observational research necessitates three major concepts be included in the research design: 1) the participants of the study influence the content and form of the observations; 2) the observer is now intrusive to the natural setting and in fact becomes a member of the setting; and, 3) the research is more subjective in nature and is accounted for by the researcher illuminating his or her personal bias and background to the participants, as described in the research methodology below (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011).
The design of this research method is described in four stages, with varying degrees of participant influence integrated into the design. The four stages were Initial Observations, Researcher Integration, Reflection and Synthesis, and Delayed Reflective Journal. The four-stage design was implemented for three additional reasons:

1. The creation of a scaffold of learning was needed for the researcher to discover the information in a logical and easy manner (Vygosky, 1978);
2. Building relationships with the participants in order garner more information while interviewing and create an ease of procurement of the interviews themselves; and,
3. It was determined that an insider experience of the Music Program at Fusion was essential to gain access and decipher information regarding impact of the Music Program on its youth and its Program leaders.

In order to account for researcher bias, the following is a description of the researcher’s experience, gender, race, age and social status. The researcher is a white male of 28-29 years of high middle class birth. He is an amateur musician, trained in environmental science at an undergraduate level and attended teacher’s college for secondary school education. He also has experience teaching music and windsurfing to youth through private lessons. He is currently a Master’s candidate, studying Capacity Development and Extension at the University of Guelph.

**Stage 1: Initial Observations**

In March of 2014 direct observations of the Music Program for the first few days of data collection were performed. The Program leaders were contacted through Fusion’s administration and the proposed research was presented at a staff meeting prior to data
collection. During this time, field notes were taken on a daily basis. In order to structure the research so that the learning occurred in a logical manner, the following observations were made using a checklist and a daily journal.

Observations of the learning methods being used by the program leaders included: behaviour management techniques, mentoring techniques, relationship building and group instruction techniques. The areas of observations were:

1) Observations of the music lessons performed by the program leaders were completed to ascertain the teaching style and methodologies used by both leaders;

2) Observations of the recording sessions and the editing process afterwards were used to identify learning processes of the youth and explore their experience of the music production process;

3) Observations of the attitudes the youth have towards their peers in the Music Program and Program leaders;

4) Observations of the actions of the youth and the program leaders in regards to developmental assets were completed to provide baseline for further learning and development outcomes within the two month period of observation;

5) Observations of other structures that lead to learning, especially peer-to-peer learning;

6) Notes and observations of the physical studio, the jam/practice hall and the social environment were taken; and,

7) Daily routines, schedules and timetables of the youth and Program leaders were recorded.
During this time, the researcher also distributed the letter of information and consent form regarding the observational process to the participants. This procedure was three-fold: 1) enabled the youth participants and Program leaders to provide informed consent; 2) allowed the researcher to explain his presence and his research to the participants; and, 3) enabled the participants to ask questions regarding the research, their concerns and provide feedback to the researcher concerning the observational process.

Stage 2: Researcher Integration

After the initial observations, the researcher was integrated into the ‘performances’ as a participant, in order to build a deeper understanding of the experiences of the youth during music playing, composing, and recording. The integration took place over a three-week period during the months of March and April 2014. The following took place during this stage of the participant observation period:

1) Participation in jamming sessions to discover how this improvisational music experience affected the participants and the researcher.

2) Conversations with the youth participants and Program leaders in order to build a relationship with them. This procedure enabled the researcher to understand the motives for participation, any sources of tension between the youth and Program leaders and amongst youth, and the opinions youth had about the Music Program and their leaders.

3) Observations and identification of learning outcomes of leaders and youth as a result of their participation in the Music Program. Learning outcomes included musical and social (i.e. confidence, communication and listening) skills acquired.
The researcher then reflected on the musical actions and conversations in the form of an observatory journal prepared on a weekly basis.

**Stage 3: Reflection and Synthesis**

The last three weeks of the participant observation was a reflective and synthesis stage. This stage included:

1) Identification of the developmental impact of the Music Program (for example the building of the Five “C” assets as well as creativity),

2) Identification of what the Music Program means to youth and its Program leaders,

3) Conversations regarding ‘when I come to Fusion’ or ‘what does Fusion mean to me’ took place to further the researcher’s understanding of motivation for coming to Fusion and the meaning youth attribute to the time they spend participating in Fusion’s activities;

4) Observation of instances where youth feel they are significant members of Fusion’s Music Program community.

Two reflections were written, in the form of a journal, during this stage of the participant observation procedure.

**Stage 4: Delayed Reflective Journal**

In Stage 4, a reflective Journal was written 2 months after the researcher’s time at Fusion in order to create a synthesized view of the overall state of the Music Program and express a reflection of the researcher’s time there. The journal included the researcher’s opinions on:
1) General experience at Fusion (i.e. his thoughts, emotions and feelings while he was at Fusion) and his opinion on what Fusion’s Music Program meant to the youth participants;

2) The potential of Fusion’s Music Program;

3) The failings and successes of Fusion’s Music Program;

4) Recommendations for the future of the Program in light of the reflections made in this and previous journals.

During this stage in the research, previous journals created were read and notes based on the researcher’s current view on these older observations were written down.

**In Depth Semi-Structured Interviews**

A small number of intensive interviews were conducted in order to create a deeper information base (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The thoughts, behaviours, actions, attitudes, perspectives, life history, social situations and motives regarding the Music Program at Fusion were topics of the interviews. The above topics provide a richness of data inaccessible by others procedures (Christie, 2012; Flyvbjerg 2011). The interviews were private (one-on-one basis) allowing for more personal conversation topics to be raised due to the absence of peers and authority figures, which decreased pressure on the interviewee (Christie, 2012; Boyce & Neale, 2006). The in-depth interviews provided a powerful tool for the researcher as it supplied much of the data needed for analysis.

To ensure the interview process minimized bias, a semi-structured interview procedure was adopted (Christie, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009). Given the array of interpretations qualitative data can create, a set of questions was prepared before the interviews. The preparation period provided the
researcher with a common basis of questions for analysis (Denzin, 2011). The interview process for youth occurred in two stages. In the first stage, five youth were interviewed. These five interviews were reviewed and for the next stage of the interviews, the questions were altered to provide better information regarding the objectives of the study. This created a reflective process ensuring better quality of data (Christie, 2012).

Eleven semi-structured interviews were completed in April and May of 2014. Nine youth participants were interviewed to garner information regarding their experience at Fusion. The two current Music Program leaders were interviewed about their role as a teacher, mentor and leader to the youth. These were conducted to build on the information provided by the participants and to provide different perspectives on the effectiveness of the Program and the experiences of the youth.

A past program leader was interviewed in August 2014 about his experiences at Fusion. The primary purpose of this interview was to elicit a past Program leader’s perspectives on the outcomes, experiences, and structures that shaped his experience at Fusion’s Music Program.

Most of the interviews were similar in context to keep consistency in the procedure. It was determined that youth participation in the Music Program must be more than six months to qualify for an interview because the research examined the Music Program’s impact on the youths’ development. It was assumed that the longer a youth had been attending the Program the greater the effect it would have on the youth’s development. After observation of the Program for approximately 7 days, consultation with the Program leaders and consultation with the Masters student’s advising professor (Prof. Al Lauzon), it was determined that six months of participation was long enough for
the effects of the Music Program on a youth’s development to be measured. Eleven of the interviews were completed at Fusion, the majority of which took place in the recording studio (which was separate and sound proofed from the rest of the Program’s available space). All the interviews were 15-50 minutes in length. The interviews conducted at Fusion were all completed in person. The interview with the past Program leader was performed over Skype. All interviews were held on a voluntary basis and all eligible participants involved in the Music Program were offered the opportunity to be interviewed thereby participating in the research project.

Validation Focus Group

A validation focus group was used to substantiate information obtained previously through participant observation and interviews (Christie, 2012; Heath, et al., 2009; Palys, 1997). The format of a small discussion group allows for constructive conversation. The dissemination of research and a question-answer period allows the researcher time to describe the preliminary findings in a co-operative manner. The focus group also creates an atmosphere that allows the participants and researcher to reflect on their experiences during the data collection phase (Christie, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Health, et al., 2009; Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Morgan, 1996).

In May 2014, a thirty-minute focus group discussion was conducted with six participants. The small group discussion was intended to verify the findings of the interviews. As such, the validation focus group took place after the interview data was reviewed. The preliminary findings were first presented orally to the group in order to prepare the participants for the discussion questions. The facilitator asked questions regarding: The meaning the youth applied to their participation in Fusion’s Music
Program, their learning through the Program, motivation to participate in the Program, and recommendations they had to improve the Program. The tone of the small group discussion was conversational. The conversational tone encouraged participants to reflect, respond to and build on their peers’ ideas. Adding to the validation process, the focus group explored the research questions prepared by the researcher after a cursory examination of the interviews and observations.

**Analysis**

Using the following process, a qualitative analysis was conducted by coding and sorting the data collected through observations, field notes, interview recordings, and the validation focus group recording.

1) The data was coded according to themes first using sticky notes. The sticky notes were coded by using different colours or shapes of sticky note for each theme. The information contained on each sticky note identified the alphanumeric code for the interviewee, then the focus group, interview or observation field note related to the theme. A quotation or observation was written on the note. In the case of the data originating from a recording, the time stamp was written on the sticky note.

2) Sticky notes were placed on a wall in groups corresponding to the theme category, identified by the sticky notes shape and colour. The positive youth development assets framework (The Six ‘C’ model) with the addition of the assets of creativity, flow and experiential learning were used in a conceptual framework to create the original themes used during analysis.
3) After all the data was sorted, the sticky notes were reviewed. At this point, three additional themes emerged from the data: Culture of the Music Program, opportunities for participants and Program leaders, and challenges for the leaders.

4) During a second review of the sticky notes, the data was sorted into sub themes by re-arranging the sticky notes within the themes by commonality of topic. When appropriate, a sticky note was moved into another theme category.

5) For recording purposes, pictures were taken of the wall of sticky notes. The pictures were used primarily to replace any sticky note that had fallen off the wall.

6) The wall of sticky notes was then synthesized into an Excel document containing themes and sub-themes. Talking points that corresponded with the quotations and observations were added to the Excel document under the sub-themes.

7) Using the Excel document and wall of sticky notes as a guide, the findings chapters were written in narrative form. The names of all participants and leaders were changed to pseudonyms in order to use quotations and observations in explicating the findings. Telling the story of the effect the Music Program has on the daily lives of the youth participants and its Program leaders was completed. Each theme is discussed in detail and provides some biographical information about the key youth participants and Program leaders.
The above process was designed to build a structure that encouraged the researcher to critically reflect during the analysis of the data. Reflection enables the researcher to find the emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes and talking points were peer-reviewed by the researcher’s advisor and classmates to assure validity of the analysis.

**Limitations of the research**

In order to achieve the learning objectives of this study, restrictions were placed on the scope and scale of the research. Given that a case study methodology was utilized, the scope of the study is bounded by the context of a single unit of measure, Fusion’s Music Program. As described in chapter three and above, Fusion is located in a small town in South Western Ontario. The experiences, histories, and social pressures that lie within rural Ontario influenced the stories told in Chapter 6 of this thesis. In addition, Fusion’s Music Program is unique, as other programs with its large scope and scale do not exist in rural areas of Ontario. Therefore, generalizations and comparisons outside the context of youth in the rural area of South Western Ontario would be erroneous unless the researcher accounts for the context of the research. Furthermore, this case study is limited as the data collection was restricted to the concepts that are within the scope of the conceptual framework. Therefore, the use of this study outside the fields of positive psychology, education, music, afterschool programming, and capacity development would be erroneous.

This research study was limited by its scale. This thesis examines and describes the impact of a Music Program on the lives of youth and the Program leaders after the Program has existed for 5 years. The consequences of the temporal scale are two fold.
1) Impacts that rely on a longer time-period to arise cannot be ascertained; and,
2) The data from observations is strictly momentary as the observation time period becomes a small subset of the Program. Therefore, observational data can only validate data that is evident during the observation period.

For purposes of this case study the scale of the research on the Music Program was limited to its current youth members, and its past and present Program leaders. Therefore, the graduated youth members as well as the parents of the participants were not interviewed. Their thoughts and feelings with regards to the Music Program at Fusion remain unknown. In limiting the scale of the case study, some data remains outside the realm of the research. Even though the scale and scope of the study limited the knowledge acquired, this case study of Fusion’s Music Program created valuable understandings of the impacts a rural Music Program can have on the youth of South Western Ontario.

Ethical Considerations

In order to initiate research with human subjects, the University of Guelph’s Research Ethics Board requires the researcher to consider the ethical ramifications of the intended research. The current thesis accounts for ethical issues concerning consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and adverse effects to personal wellbeing. A letter indicating that the ethical issues surrounded the research as well as an explanation of the research was distributed to the participants in the study so that participants could give informed consent.

Given the small size of the program, guarantee of anonymity was not possible. Any information reported by participants that indicates that participant is:
1) In danger of abuse
2) Being abused
3) Abusing another

was to be reported to the authorities and the advising Professor immediately. Therefore, confidentiality was guaranteed so far as the disclosed data did not involve reports of abuse. To minimize adverse consequences of this study on participants and staff, the researcher respected autonomy and dignity of all participants and planned an exit strategy in order to minimize the sense of loss experienced by the youth.

**The Methodological Challenges of Studying Youth**

Studying youth can be quite different than studying children or adults (Christie, 2012). It is important to note, as described in the previous chapter, that youth are in a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, which requires them to bear the responsibilities of an adult independently (Illeris, 2007). While bearing this new responsibility, youth discover their identity and deal with a great deal of change associated with today’s Western society (Illeris, 2006; Corbett, 2013). Therefore, research technique must be accommodated to the youth’s specific needs surrounding autonomy, risk taking and power dynamics with adults. While researching youth at Fusion, Christie’s (2012) four principles written by Best (2007) were implemented in order to account for the challenges researchers face when studying youth. The principles are:

1) A sustained concern for and consideration of the complexities of power and exploitation in the research encounter;
2) An acknowledgement of the connection between power and knowledge. Such an acknowledgement requires that we recognize that the accounts we provide shape and construct reality. Youth researchers play a significant role in shaping the social experiences of children and youth through the discursive constructions or accounts we provide,

3) A desire to conduct sound ethical research that empowers youth and children and to find ways to improve the conditions under which their lives unfold;

4) A commitment to radical reflexivity that interrogates the varied points of difference that intersect in our own lives and those we study. (Best 2007 p. 9; Christie 2012 p. 51)

Several authors have discussed the presence of power dynamics during youth development (Christie, 2012; Best, 2007; Leonard, 2007; Heath et al. 2009; Mahon et al., 1996; Eder & Fingerson, 2001; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). An abuse of power by researchers can have deleterious effects on youths’ development by creating mistrust between the youth and the adult community (Best, 2007; Leonard, 2007; Heath et al., 2009; Mahon et al., 1996). Given the potential risk to youth of research that involves power dynamics, egalitarian strategies should be used to account for the power differential between youth participants and the adult researcher (Christie, 2012; Eder & Fingerson, 2001).

Having youth self-consent allows youth to be autonomous and bear the responsibility of the effects of the study. By allowing the youth to decide if participation in a study is appropriate, self-consent fosters agency in the youth participating in the
studies. Consent without parental involvement is essential to fostering agency in youth by relieving parental pressure from the youths’ decision-making process (Christie, 2012; Marrow & Richards, 1996; Heath, Charles, Crow, & Wiles, 2007; Sauci, Sawyer, Weller, Bond, & Patton, 2004; Koren, Birenbaum Carmeli, Carmeli, & Haslam, 1993; Leatherdale, Sparks, & Kirsh, 2006). Self-consent was administered at the onset of the study in order to encourage egalitarian power dynamics. In addition, by considering the above principles while interacting with the youth, the researcher acquired an equal role with the youth instead of one of authority.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology used to complete this thesis. A case study was chosen as the method of research of Fusion’s Music Program because of its unique nature as a popular music education facility in a rural area. By bounding the case study to only include the Music Program, the researcher was able to understand the impacts of the Program on the youth participants. The use of a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to tell the story of the youth who participated in Fusion’s Music Program in the spring of 2014, providing a rich and deep understanding of the role this popular Music Program played in the youths’ lives. The qualitative techniques used were interviews, participant observation, and a validation focus group. Through participant observation, the researcher was able to create the basis of his research. More specifically, he observed his surroundings and behaviours of the Program leaders and participants, immersed himself in the music of the studio by improvising music (jamming) with the
youth, and collaborated with the participants through informal conversation. The
interviews provided a deeper understanding of the meaning the youth and leaders build in
their lives as they participate in the Program. The focus group validated the researcher’s
thoughts and understandings with regards to the preliminary themes and talking points he
had created from the data. By sorting the data with sticky notes into themes, the data from
the three collection procedures was analyzed. The findings and analysis are ultimately
limited in scale and scope. Finally, the ethical considerations concerning informed
consent, confidentiality, and researching youth were discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

The following chapter provides evidence that Fusion’s Music Program plays a
pivotal role in the lives of rural youth living in Ingersoll. The chapter describes in
narrative form: the challenges the staff endure in their daily lives, the culture of the
program, the opportunity the program provides for the youth, the meaning the youth
ascribe to their time at Fusion’s Music Program, the identity formation the youth
undergo, the process and content of the youth’s learning, the development of the youth
within the categories of the seven ‘C’s (competence, confidence, connection, character,
caring, contribution and creativity), and the Flow experiences of the youth while creating
or listening to music.

Challenges of the Staff

This section describes the daily life of a Program leader at Fusion’s music studio
to portray the challenges the leaders face. A past program leader Bobbie described that he
used to “arrive at Fusion between 1:30pm - 2:15pm”. At this time, the leader was responsible for “cleaning the studio … preparing lesson plans … and preparing the music studio” so that the youth can play the available instruments. If a recording session is scheduled, the recording equipment needs to be set up so that audio recordings are optimal for later production. Observations of the current leaders corroborated this information provided by Bobbie. During the researchers data collection period the Youth entered the Music Program starting at 2:30pm after Fusion opens. Available activities include music lessons (both instrumental and vocal), recording and open jam. The Music Program runs from Monday – Thursday from 2:30pm - 9pm.

During the first day of the visit the staff members who organize the activities within the Music Program discussed the challenge they faced due to the many activity options and the limited space the program provides. The following is a summary of that initial discussion. The studio has three rooms. The first room is large and used for, ‘jamming’, music lessons, instrumental recording and practicing. As this room cannot accommodate anymore than one activity at a time, it impossible for all the activities to occur at the same time. The second room is a vocal booth strictly used for recording singing and radio commercials. The third room is a recording suite, which is also often used for multiple activities including listening, music production and music lessons. Having only two useable rooms to support a great number of programming options creates difficulties for the staff members as balancing all the activities are nearly impossible. Additionally having no provision of practice rooms for the youth leads to the open jam period usually becoming a cacophony as youth use the large room to practice different music.
During recording sessions and music lessons the studio is often closed to other youth, unless permission is given by the student for others to be in the room. The youth often do want privacy during their lessons. Youth at Fusion are often shy about their musical ability. Several of the youth who were interviewed voiced that they were self-conscious while singing in front of people. Ron stated that:

You start feeling a little less comfortable and more on the nervous side [when] there is a bunch of other people in there, it’s kind of like oh shit, I might fuck this up or they might think it’s a joke.

This shy behaviour often prevented youth from playing in concerts put on by Fusion. Program leaders wanting to arrange concerts so that the youth could publically display their talents were often disappointed by the low turn out. The leaders found that attempting to get the youth to play and sing in front of others challenging. Harry expressed his frustration stating:

They again are really hard to organize because they are here hit or miss. A lot of the people I teach lessons to are quite introverted actually… Some of them are just really shy and they have never been asked to play for other people. There is almost this substantial opening up process with me. Once we do that then we have this comfort level and I will ask them why don't you play at the coffee house coming up or something and they are just like ‘no not a chance’.

Concerts at Fusion were deemed unsuccessful as willing participants were difficult to find. Therefore, youth had little opportunity to perform at Fusion. Combating the shy nature of the youth at Fusion’s Music Program is challenging for the leaders.

Fusion’s Music Program is part of a drop-in youth centre. The nature of a drop-in centre created challenges for the staff members. The leaders reported a lack of accountability from the youth who frequent the youth centre on drop-in basis. This was evidenced by a lack of consistency towards attendance to lessons, a lack of discipline while attending their lesson, youth not practicing between lessons, and youth quitting
lessons after only a few months. The leaders described three major reasons for the lack of accountability from the youth whom attend the drop-in centre: lack of financial value associated with music lessons, too many different programs available and lack of novelty associated with the after school program. A previous Program leader, Bobby, hypothesized that, “The youth feel as though free lessons have little worth [in their lives as] there is no financial value associated with free music lessons”. With no financial value associated with the lessons, the accountability to practice decreases resulting in a lower attendance to the music lessons. However, Harry believed there was an “expectation to attend lessons for the privilege of having free lessons”. Harry observed that there was an increase in attendance consistency after the program became lesson based. However, he still found it difficult to attract the youth to the Music Program, even if they attended other areas of Fusion on a daily basis. Harry observed that “70%, just come and take a lesson and go home … are more consistent” while “harder ones to keep, [are] the ones who actually use Fusion all the time. It is funny”

A lack of attendance may also be due to the youth participating in other activities at Fusion. I remember talking to Luke about this issue. He said that:

It gets frustrating, I’m constantly on the radio with other leaders tracking down youth for their lessons … they are usually participating in other programmes or just hanging out in the lounge … sometimes they just don’t come.

This quote speaks to youth’s value structure toward the activities at Fusion. Sometimes youth prefer to hang out with friends or do something different than attend their set music lessons. When the youth miss lessons, the leaders become frustrated as lesson planning is wasted. As a solution, the leaders spend less time planning the lessons in order to maximize other activities in the Music Program. The instructors started to record the
youth’s progress in order to present a visual form of accountability and progression.

Lesson plans now are mostly youth driven. The first five minutes of each lesson involves a question and answer period in which the learning objectives of the student are discovered. The leader then improvises a lesson depending on these objectives.

Variability in participation in the music program by the drop-in-youth may also be due to the need for people to discover new things. Harry discussed his belief that the novelty of the music studio lessens after sustained participation,

[The youth] have exhausted their interest in that person. You know how kids are. It is like I am interested in you for five minutes and if you don't continue to like blow my mind then I'm going to leave. Once Luke came it was like ‘ooh!’

He went on to discuss that Luke, a new Program leader, coming to the program created a new surge of participation. Harry stated that “there was huge interest; he was the new guy.” Youth frequenting Fusion exhibit interest in new things or people, but become bored over time with consistency in the Music Program. Harry and Luke found this challenging as the youth who used Fusion as a drop-in centre would become inconsistent in attendance.

It was observed that drop-in youth favoured listening to music and ‘hanging out’ rather than playing and recording music. Adapting to both the youth who prefer programming and to those who prefer drop-in style activities poses a challenge for the leaders. Adapting to the difference in preference requires the leaders to move seamlessly from the role of a teacher to that of a supervisor or chaperone. This change of role requires the leaders to change their value structure of certain musical activities. For musicians and composers, listening to music is often valued as a tool for learning necessary skills. Therefore, listening to music is often analytical for professional
musicians. Listening to music for enjoyment is often regarded as a waste to these types of musicians. This challenged both leaders as they value playing and analyzing music over listening for enjoyment. During a discussion about the music program structure and relative merits of the interviews Luke stated, “Some youth just listen to music … I don’t know if it’s worth interviewing them.” Harry corroborated this sentiment during the same conversation with a nod of agreement, showing a leader bias towards youth not just listening to music. Even with this bias the leaders see a value in the activity of listening, as it encourages communication between the youth and the leaders. Harry saw a “soft skill kind of development where they are learning to communicate or just hang out with someone older.” Finding the balance between programming (lessons and recording) and open time (listening and open jam) was difficult.

As a solution to the above challenges with regards to the limited space, drop-in nature of the program and the lack of motivation the youth exhibited, the program leaders scheduled activities into different times of the day and week. For example, as of April 2014, one-on-one voice or instrumental lessons are scheduled from Monday to Wednesday. On Thursday, the youth are given the opportunity to record music. On Saturdays the music room is rarely open, as there are no lessons or recording activities scheduled and the music leader is often required to supervise other parts of Fusion. The music room is used for open jamming, practice and listening if no other activities are scheduled and the studio is open. This solution prioritized time for lessons and recording over group jamming, practicing instruments and listening to music.

The personal challenges for leaders were seen over time. The leader who is currently working at Fusion, Luke, at the time of the data collection had only been
working at Fusion for 6 months. Luke reported only one personal challenge. He found it difficult evaluating the students’ skill level when the youth started at the program. “Figuring out where they are, that is the hardest part.” Luke reported that he had “not done a lot of teaching before he came here.” As an inexperienced teacher being unfamiliar with evaluation techniques is to be expected. Consequently, offering professional development may go a long way to alleviating this challenge.

However, Harry and Bobbie worked at Fusion for over a year and reported many personal challenges related to their job. Harry included working evenings as a major challenge before changing to part-time work. Harry was required to be at Fusion every day from roughly 1:00pm until 9:00pm. This changed once Luke arrived at the program, reducing Harry’s workload. Speaking about the hours, Harry stated:

On a personal level, working evenings is definitely a challenge. Working every day from one to five and losing every Friday of your life and half of your Saturday nights, that gets pretty tiring. I don't do that anymore because I am down to part time, but still every Monday and Wednesday I am here all evening. It gets a bit tough. It is a good job, but I would definitely like to have dinner at home.

By working every evening, he could not have dinner with his girlfriend and was often not home until after 10pm. He missed his girlfriend as result and wished he could spend more time with her. At the time of the interview, Harry was working only part time at Fusion in order to spend more time with his girlfriend.

Low pay is a personal challenge leaders face on a daily basis. The result was a lack of motivation to teach music lessons. During the observation period Harry would often state that he could “earn money more by teaching private lessons”, and as a result he “lacked passion” to plan lessons. When effort is placed into planning and then youth want to do
something different at a lesson or don’t show up, it becomes very frustrating and reinforces the lack of passion.

Bobbie reported a lack of preparation time for programming and having to cancel programming time as challenges he faced during his time as the program coordinator. He also mentioned a corporate atmosphere, a lack of support from management, the knowledge that he was readily replaceable, and low pay as personal challenges. Bobbie told a story about how management made it difficult to run rock concerts at Fusion. Bobbie, in an effort to build a flourishing rock music scene, started to hold weekly concerts at Fusion. He involved the youth in the promotional stages of the weekly events. Communication between the bands, the youth, and Bobbie became difficult as information was often relayed improperly between the involved parties. During each concert, the crowd would became uncontrollable. During the last concert, Bobbie pulled the plug to cut the power to end the concert, as the bands would not stop playing after curfew. Bobbie described the scene as dangerous and rowdy, however no Fusion management member accompanied Bobbie out of the building to protect him. He stated, “No one had my back.” The concerts were cancelled after that. Bobbie blamed management for this lack of support stating: “It’s because they run Fusion like a business,” implying that a concern for money overrides the development of youth. Interestingly, Bobbie also described his frustrations working as a government employee. He was disgruntled at cancelling lessons because he was asked to do something outside of Fusion, stating, “I felt awful cancelling lessons because (my boss) asked me to be somewhere else.” He went on to say he thought it was “part of being a employee of the municipality … when there was a need for a sound tech, I was the cheapest option so they
asked me.” Unfortunately, Bobbie’s experience at Fusion resulted in him quitting. When asked about his experience at Fusion he stated, “Well I am no longer in youth work, that should tell you something.” He described the above stories as reasons for his departure from both Fusion and working with youth. Harry and Luke were also frustrated about having to cancel lessons for similar reasons as stated by Bobbie. The researcher observed their frustrations when their lessons were cancelled as they were told to supervise other programs at Fusion.

It appeared evident through interviews and observations that the longer a leader stayed at Fusion the higher the frustration level climbed due to these challenges. Job satisfaction is eventually outweighed by the stresses of working with inconsistent youth, in a job with little pay, long hours in the evening and working in a management structure that pulls a person away from their core job description. This may contribute to a high turnover rate of the music program leader position at Fusion.

The Culture of the Fusion Music Program

The interviews of the youth and leaders provide evidence that the culture at Fusion’s Music Program is inspiring, authentic, inclusive, supportive, and equitable. These key aspects of the culture will be described in detail through this section.

Program leaders, the nature of Fusion as a whole, and the participants create the culture at Fusion’s Music Program. The Program leaders in charge of the Music Program set a culture that inspire the youth to become great musicians by playing to the best of their abilities and showing youth the potential of musicianship. The youth describe the musical skills of the Program leaders as “crazy” and “awesome”. The live musicals performed by the leaders at Fusion are compelling by nature, as the technique, emotion
and artistry that is often showcased ‘wows’ the youth. The youth then aspire to perform in a similar manner. The Program leaders also create a ‘hard-core’ music culture in the program. The culture is produced by the authentic nature of the Program leaders and is legitimized through their playing and tutelage of popular music. During the focus group John talked about his experience learning from experienced musicians:

It is really fantastic how people with college or university degrees who have been in the industry and play all the time… have their own personal sounds. [Harry] and [Luke] have a ton of differences in their playing and I think that kind of makes the program even better. Having two teachers and having the ability to play [in] any variety … kind of opens up a lot of creative opportunities for you.

The culture of the program is attributed to the leaders musical pedigree, which enables them to attract and engage youth. The program and leaders are therefore perceived as “cool” by new youth attendees as seen by researcher observations.

The culture of the program is also created by its physical and aesthetic characteristics. The nature of the studio is welcoming. This feeling was described as “[feeling] like home, its very welcoming; warm”. Characteristics of the music studio are contributing factors to the inclusive feeling described above. Harry described the experience of the Music Program:

We've got a cozy couch and we've got YouTube. Sometimes that ends up being the bulk of the work is just hanging out with kids and watching TV. Some kids love that.

This feeling of relaxedness is helped by the comfortable couch and relaxed nature of the leaders. The Music Program provides structure for socialization through the provision of YouTube and a couch. As a program centered in music, a common interest in pop music provides a support structure for socialization: “All [an interest in music] really is, is a structure point in the relationship with somebody, a friendship.” Stanley went on say:
It is the support beam in a house. If that beam falls everything kind of goes with it. If your relationship starts with that one thing and suddenly one person loses interest in music you kind of feel like ‘oh that is kind of how I met you’.

Stanley’s description shows how a common interest in music enables them to have structure points for conversation. Music becomes a “common watering hole” as described by Bobbie, which creates an environment which encourages conversation between youth and encourages them to teach each other new things. Easy conversation is thereby created and helps build this relaxed and comfortable feeling, which is reflected in the “cool” culture at Fusion Music Program.

A positive social atmosphere is part of the culture at Fusion. The program is inclusive. From the beginning, upon the insistence of the first Program leader, the participants were encouraged to uphold the values of equity, openness and supportiveness. The older participants who lead by example have passed down the values of the first leader, Bobbie who stated that, “all the youth who entered the music studio were equal. It didn’t matter if you’re popular at school or if you have money. All that was left at the door.” Bobbie added that “the program was open to anybody, we even had autistic kids do lessons.” The equitable and open culture is now largely self-governed. No negative language is allowed at Fusion. No gossip, put downs, racist rhetoric, sexist slurs or classist comments are used as a sign of respect. Harry noted that,

It is also a good social environment. I find that in the amount of time I have been here I don't think I have heard once people making fun of each other for how they play. I honestly can't think of an example where that has happened. It has been really supportive and that has been good to see.

The supportive nature of Fusion Music Program enables youth to create a positive social atmosphere, which is open to all. When asked about the exclusivity that sometimes becomes prevalent in music culture the youth participants affirmed that “anyone with an
interest in music is welcome.” The youth, with the support of the leaders, practice
equality by leaving the social status of the individuals outside the walls of the studio and
by treating everyone and the equipment with respect. By building a positive social
environment, the participants create a culture of equity, support, and openness at Fusion
Music Program.

The impact of the culture at Fusion Music Program on the youth will be discussed
in further sections.

Opportunity

Fusion’s Music Program offers the youth participants the opportunity to learn
about pop music, from one-on-one lessons in various instruments and vocals to
production and recording of music. The youth in the program recognize that the music
facilities and teaching style at Fusion Music Program is an opportunity uniquely available
in Ingersoll. In addition, the safe social environment allows youth to freely explore music
and socialize with friends.

Learning How to Play and Sing ‘Popular’ Music

Given the capacities of popular music tutelage at Fusion Music Program, youth in
the Ingersoll have a rare learning opportunity. It is evident that the youth interested in
learning popular music take advantage of this opportunity. For example, Stanley spoke of
the differences of learning music at Fusion rather than at school.

For one at school there are a lot more people in the room and so you kind of feel
more stress behind it. At school I don't have as much freedom of what I want to
learn because everyone is learning it.

Many of the youth that participate at Fusion have been involved in music through school;
for instance, many play violin, bass, guitar, or sing in choirs. However, having the
opportunity to have the one-on-one lessons offered at Fusion is advantageous as it allows for increased guidance while learning with a lack of pressure. When Lisa was asked about the differences between Fusion and school, she explained, “For school it is like you get marked on it … you have to do your best. [At Fusion] it is kind of like you can mess up … because you can redo it.” Youth have also expressed that they are able to play the instruments and songs they prefer at Fusion. Paul is able to play songs from his favourite band: “It’s cool because I get to play songs I like … I get to learn the guitar solos from ‘Kiss’ … my favourite band”. The youth usually prefer to play songs in the genres of ‘popular’ music such as country, rock, metal and alternative music but also get to play 21st century classical music they do not get to play in school. Stanley went on to discuss his experience of learning ‘The Hobbit Song’ from the movie Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring at Fusion as “trilling, I was happy to learn it.” These genres are not normally offered through school programs, where music is normally classical or concert band based in nature. Fusion Music Program offers training in five instruments of popular music (guitar, electric bass, drums, piano and vocals), thereby providing the perfect opportunity for youth explore different genres from in-school programs.

Learning In a Free Manner

The learning structure at the Music Program offers the participants the opportunity to choose what they would like to learn and, to a certain degree, how they would like to learn. Harry described the structure of the lessons,

We do one-on-one lessons and so I take the youth and sort of figure out what they want to do. We start off the lessons by figuring out what instrument they want to be on of course and then what their favourite type of music is and then figuring out what they want to accomplish with learning. So instead of just handing them an outline and saying here is what we will do in the first year, we pretty much go lesson by lesson geared to what they want to do. Some days they’ll show up and
I'll have something planned, but I'll say what do you want to do today? They'll say, ‘oh I found this cool song I want to learn’ and show [it to me]. Then I will take what I've learned or what I have planned and put that on the back burner and teach them what they want to learn and try to implement as much knowledge and insight as I can into what they are doing.

While they are saying ‘oh this song sounds cool’, I will tell them why the guitar part sounds the way it does or what technique that is called, thus implementing the theory as you go, but gearing it more towards their direction. That way it keeps it interesting for them.

Youth-driven learning is a rarity in the daily lives of these youth, as the schools learning structure is largely instructor and curriculum driven. It was observed that the majority of the youth flourished when given the freedom to choose their own learning objectives.

**Recording and Production**

The recording studio within the Music Program offers youth the opportunity to record and produce music. The music recorded in the studio can take two different forms. First, youth are offered the opportunity to cover a popular music song in a Karaoke style. The song’s instrumentals are used from an online source such as YouTube. The youth then record their vocals on top of the song’s instrumentals. This method of recording is quick, providing the youth with immediate feedback for learning purposes. This process is also used for youth learning to sing their favourite songs. “I come in here and asked to record a song. I just like to sing and it makes me feel really good when I sing.” Lindsay said when asked about recording songs at Fusions Music Program. Lindsay is the prototypical drop-in youth who prefers this method, as they are looking for something quick and easy to learn while at Fusion. Lindsay says she “likes to sing a lot and so I come in and book an appointment and record some songs.” Given Lindsay’s observed preference to sing songs of popular music artists, it is most effective to use this Karaoke recording style. The second type of recording conducted at the Music Program requires
the full use of instrumentals and editing functions available. Each instrument and the vocals are recorded separately. The audio files are finally mixed together and mastered digitally by the Program leader together with interested youth. The process is more intricate and takes more time, therefore it was observed that the youth interested in composing and instrumental lessons frequented this method. Ron spoke of his preference to record music when he attends Fusion.

Currently, usually I jam with my friend [John], and [Harry], and [Luke], whoever’s in, playing new stuff, learning some new stuff, just kind of doing whatever, sometimes a little bit of recording, sometimes a little bit of everything.

He later spoke of his dislike of “manufacturing” music when using the Karaoke style of recording liking it to “absolutely nothing”. The participants find enjoyment in recording, either by developing artistic skills through the creation of new music or by producing covers of their favourite songs.

The studio also provides the opportunity for youth to learn the technical skills of recording, mixing, and producing music at an industry standard studio. Youth find self satisfaction when producing music by mixing audio tracks previously recorded at Fusion. For example, Charles, a 16 year old who attends recording and audio mixing lessons at Fusion believes that the ability to learn to mix audio tracks is “fun”. Generally, it was found that the youth showed gratitude for the opportunity to learn to use and be exposed to a professional recording studio. When asked about the array of activities, John said “it is something different. I had never used or been around any kind of recording technology before. So being around that and getting used to it, that is pretty cool.” Many youth also said that the array of activities was a reason for why they were drawn into the Music Program to begin with.
Opportunity to Socialize

Finally, the youth take the opportunity to socialize while attending Fusion Music Program. By offering time to listen to music, youth are able to ‘hang out’ with friends. The youth are able to listen to music they want, as loud as they like and from a set of professional grade speakers, which is rare. During the observation period, the youth would often listen to music in groups, blaring it loudly. At times, the youth would talk to one another about music, video games, YouTube videos and other interests. The youth took advantage of the “cozy couch” mentioned by Harry and the “chaperoned communication” that occurs at Fusion. During the interview with Harry,

Sometimes we'll go browsing through the internet and a person will be like hey check this out. Look what I found. It is sort of like that chaperone communication skill. I hate to use that word, but it is like there is never any issues because there is a staff member right here and so they can communicate with each other with a lot of confidence.

Communicating with an adult supervisor present provided the youth with an opportunity to learn how to communicate with decreased risk of feeling put down.

Through open jam, Fusion Music Program also offers the youth a place to play together. Playing together in free form is not regularly offered at school. By providing a place to “jam out and talk with friends” according to Lindsay, the Music Program enables the youth to freely challenge themselves through music. By jamming with friends the youth were required to communicate amongst themselves to create music. It was observed that youth would often socialize during and after the jam session to indicate key changes and rhythm alterations. The provision of the open jam time and the supplied instruments provide youth the opportunity to socialize with their peers in many different ways.
Through the provision of an array of activities including a professional music studio and music lessons, Fusion offers youth the ability to learn musical instruments and socialize. By offering youth-driven one-on-one music lessons in pop music, Fusion gives youth a chance to play and sing songs from their favourite artist or compose their own songs. The professional music studio offers youth the opportunity to record, listen to, and play music, as well as socialize with friends. The impact of the above opportunities will be discussed further in the following sections.

**Meaning and Identity**

The youth participants believe that their time spent at the Music Program is essential. Through the opportunities afforded them through participation in the program, the youth derive meaning in their daily lives. Participation is meaningful because of the role music plays in the youths’ exploration of their personal identities. The meaning of living with a communal identity is discovered by the youth through the building of relationships, as Fusion includes each youth in a music based community. The Music Program is, therefore, a place where youth build meaning through their participation, music exploration, and relationships.

**Meaning in their daily lives**

Participation in the Music Program allows youth to find meaning in their daily lives in a variety of ways including: playing instruments, singing, recording and producing music, socializing over common interests, making friends, and engaging in activities. The following paragraphs provide evidence how the youth find meaning in their daily lives through participation.
For various reasons the eleven youth interviewed reported having “fun” while at Fusion. Enjoyment in an activity often leads to passion, enabling them to find meaning in their music and lives through being at the Centre. The youth enjoy playing and learning instruments, singing and recording in multiple forms. David discussed having fun at Fusion,

I’d say I have fun all the time. The times where I have the most fun I guess would be, I mean technical skills are useful and the product is rewarding, but I don’t think anyone has ever said, ‘oh yeah we are learning theory on modes’. I would say the most fun I have is when we are jamming or when we are learning a song that is challenging and it is something especially relevant. That is when it is really fun, but all the time we have fun in this program.

At certain times, youth have the opportunity to play and sing in a free format in the studio space as a ‘jam session’ or in a more structured mode during lessons. Through the different opportunities available, youth found that they were able to find both fun and passion for different musical forms: playing, singing, and recoding. Lindsay said that “It is actually pretty fun because I get to learn about different instruments … how they use it and stuff like that.” Youth found meaning in being challenged and having an opportunity to learn. David relished the opportunity to learn new skills,

[Learning pentatonic scales] is meaningful because it is helpful and I use it a lot and it really adds another dimension to my guitar playing. You can write stuff and I do like to write things. If you can't solo your songs are kind of all going to be like chords. That is good to some extent, but it is boring.

It is evident that by providing an array of learning activities, Fusion Music Program offers youth the ability to enjoy life, thereby helping them develop passion and enabling them to derive meaning in their lives.
Identity Exploration

At Fusion, participation in musical activities allowed youth to explore their personal identities. The youth explored both their own and each other’s distinctiveness through musical expression, by developing a personal musical style, and by learning new music. This is evidenced by the story of two participants in particular. For John and Lisa expression had become an essential part of their identity, as it freed them from convention.

John found music allowed him to express empathy. In creating music as an expression of self and others, he stated that music was an expression of his feelings,

[I was] able to take what is inside of you and give it to other people. I feel like it is kind of magical. It is like here have this. Let this become a part of you. Let me become part of you.

In understanding that musical expression can communicate emotion that is both communal and personal, John and other youth were able to look inwards to the depths of their hearts, while being aware of the influences of the audience. John really expressed those feelings in his music. This process resulted in a form of expression that is intimate and deeply personal, yet is a reflection of how he sees his audience influences. The results achieved by John were evident in his rendition of the song Zombies by The Cranberries. This song is harsh and hard, but John created the opposite by composing an intricate acoustic version. Keeping the original harshness in the song while creating a deeply personal song by using a falsetto voice revealed the new meaning that John was attempting to capture. This example displays the exploration of ones’ identity achieved by the youth at the Music Program as it takes an understanding of the musician’s
emotions as well as knowledge of how said expressions affects others to understand and use these to great advantage when creating new music.

In comparison, Lisa enjoyed the freedom in musical expression. Feeling expression has no rules: Lisa created a cover of Kim Taylor’s song “Build You Up” that was much different than the original. With an addition of a grandiose sounding ending using strings and a voice overlay (made possible by the professional studio present at Fusion), she created a new feel for the song. She intended her version to express the hopefulness and tension felt when a person tackles adversity. “It is like knowing that someone else has been down a hard road in their life and they are trying to help other people come out of where they have been.” Through their musical explorations both these participants demonstrated the power that music has as it enables youth to express empathy and learn about themselves through a reflective process.

Through exploration, the youth were able to develop musical styles unique to each of them. These styles are often conceived as musical identities (Samson, 2012). The positive cultural environment at Fusion allows the youth to create an unique musical identity. The staff and participants encourage each other to explore multiple genres. As the musicians at Fusion grow in skills, they often combine multiple genres to create their own style. Ron, a participant of Fusion for the past five years, described how he now plays several different genres on the typical four rock band instruments and with vocals.

It’s a lot of everything. Vocally it is literally everything—70’s disco, 80’s pop, 90’s boy bands, and then sometimes it’s rap, sometimes it’s like proper choral music. On the guitar it’s anything from classic 70’s and 80’s rock to modern pop music to everything Broadway-related. You’ve got to do a lot of orchestra stuff. On the bass it’s a lot of 40’s, 50’s, swing, and jazz, 70’s and 80’s disco and pop bass lines, those are a lot of fun, and drums it’s pretty much everything. There’s nothing really common between anything I can play really, just whatever I feel like at the time.
He described that this vast array of musical backgrounds helps his musicianship, as he can move from genre to genre easily and meld genres together to create a specific vibe. John also demonstrates the importance of proficiency in multiple genres in creation of a unique style. He endeavours to create a sound that is unique but also pleasing when composing or performing music:

I am really trying to make music that is easy to listen to, but sometimes it is hard to be creative and use interesting chord phrasings or interesting melodies and make it sound good. I am really trying to find the medium there where you can have something that is unique and something that is cool, but also marketable and able to be listened to.

The teenager stressed the need to further explore his music to achieve the musical identity he wants to portray in his compositions, “I just feel like it is about never stopping what you are doing and trying to explore deeper into things.”

The ability to create a distinctive musical identity through music exploration is portrayed by Lisa. Creation of a unique voice was important to Lisa in order to be identified quickly during her songs. She mentioned that a distinguishing musical style is a trait of many popular music stars. During the interview she said “Fusion helped me find the type of music that I want do … I am really into R&B and Rock & Roll. I like sounds like Whitney Houston, Maria Carry and Christina Aguilera … You know them right away when you hear them.” Lisa explores the music of several pop stars. In particular, she identified with the music of Christina Aguilera. Christina’s blend of R&B, Rock and Latin music creates a form of popular music that the teenager aspires to encompass in her singing and song writing. “I try to sing like Christina, I love her voice” the teenager noted during a recoding session at Fusion’s Music Program. These stories provide examples of youth exploring their musical identities in order to create unique music.
Exploring the Future

During their participation in activities at Fusion Music Program, youth explored futures that emerge from being trained in music. A conflict emerges within the youth while exploring their future in music: career versus hobby. The conflict was observed to manifest in different ways within the youth. The more experienced youth seemed to have a disillusioned view of their future. These youth understood the perils of the music industry; that only a few garner stardom. These youth pursue music as a hobby or discipline while debating the worth of enduring the hardship and the limited possibility of success in a music career as a musician, producer, or composer.

“Music… is still fun now there are discipline and rules,” John said. Of the more experienced youths, some have chosen a career in music and are planning to attend university for various music programs. John said during the researcher’s observation period, “I want to go to university and study music.” Others, such as Charles chose not to pursue a career in music but to enjoy it as a leisure pursuit instead. He explained, “I don’t think I want to do it as a job but as a hobby”.

The less experienced youth whom still manifest aspirations of stardom, struggle between music as a fun activity in their daily life versus music as a medium for the potential of fame and fortune. Lindsay said, “I want to be a singer,” however she attends the program because “it is fun and I get to hang out with friends.” She had not realized the hard work necessary for someone to become a professional singer. For the teenagers at Fusion’s Music Program, the exploration of their personal identities is a struggle. It appears that over time, the experience at the program enables them to make decisions that help contribute to future satisfaction.
Finding meaning in relationships

The following stories from the staff and participants portray the meaning the youth and staff place on the relationships that are built within the Music Program. Ron, a participant who has been a member since the Music Program started, told a story about his life at Fusion a few years ago,

The first thing that comes to my mind is [Bobbie’s] last day—he was definitely my favourite music staff person—his last day we basically just came in and jammed for four or five hours straight, didn’t stop and then just kind of goofed off for the last hour and just kind of threw pies at each other; that was fun.

When Bobbie was leaving, the participants of the program held a celebration to commemorate the leaders time at Fusion. Ron described that during the jam he began to understand that he had made friends in Ingersoll,

It was the first time I really realized that I had actually made friends in Ingersoll because I had never gone to school here; I’ve always gone to school in London or Woodstock. So it was like the first real time that I realized I had actually made friends here.

Finding friends in his hometown was difficult for him as he attended a school outside of Ingersoll. Ron also described how he enjoyed playing with John, Harry and Luke. He valued these friendships describing them and his past friends as “cool or chill.” The other participants at the program valued their friendships with each other and the leaders as well describing them in the same light as Ron. Stanley while talking about Luke said, “If I am having a bad week I can always look forward to chilling at Fusion, and [playing] the piano and guitar, talking to Luke or the friends who come in.”

The provision of a space that allows friendships to be built has ultimately led to the creation of a community. It is evident that the youth feel that they belong and are accepted at the studio. Stanley believed that Fusion was “like a second home”. The youth
all expressed this same sentiment when asked about coming to Fusion Music Program during the focus group. “It is the home feeling and the warmth, like you know the place a lot. You've been there and you have a lot of memories there.”

Harry observed that a new leader generally attracts more youth. He believed that the youth were curious about the new leaders and therefore moved to the new leader’s program. However, youth do create bonds with particular leaders within Fusion. Within the Music Program, Luke and Harry attract different youth as pupils. John spoke about his relationship with Harry, “He has helped me out a lot of times. He and another leader at Fusion, [Victor] and I think it is pretty extraordinary to get that at a youth center. I never thought I would.”

Stanley on the other hand preferred to talk to Luke about what it’s like to be in a band, “We talked about managing a band… there is that marketing side to it, as well as the politics side, plus the relationship side,” Stanley went on to describe the nature of the relationship, “He is my teacher even if [I] see him more as a friend.” The personalities of Luke and Harry and their individual tastes are quite different. The youth at Fusion stick to the leader that suits their personality and taste. The consequences of the relationships the youth build at Fusion’s Music Program will be discussed in the following sections pertaining to learning and the youths’ development of the ability to connect with others.

Learning

Mastering the skills and techniques used in both musical performance and composition of music drives learning at Fusion Music Program. Therefore the learning structures used by leaders are mixed depending on the participants’ needs and their motivation with regards to what they see their musical education involving. Peer-peer
learning often occurs during open jam and while listening to music as a group. It is experiential in nature, compared to the leader-youth learning structure which largely occurs during one-on-one lessons. During this time the Program leader takes the role of an instructor or music teacher and the youth becomes a student of music. Learning is aided by the building of strong relationships with the youth. The leaders build relationships in different ways but both leaders achieve in helping youth learn through their relationship. Barriers to learning music and developing social skills are related to the youth being shy and unmotivated.

Methods and structures of learning used at Fusion’s Music Program

The structures and methods of learning at Fusion Music Program are distinguished into two categories: peer-to-peer learning and program leader-youth learning.

Peer-to-peer learning

Peer-to-peer learning was seen clearly between the youth at the music program. Youth usually learn from peers during open jam time. Youth reported learning parts of their technique from other youth through instruction when attending open jam. Ron talked about learning from John and vice versa, “I taught him quite a bit of stuff like a typical swing jazz-style bass line and he showed me more classical double-bass type stuff.” The youth also learned through the experience of playing in a group at open jam. The researcher identified three methods that directly lead to learning. Playing and singing in a group while actively listening to oneself and the music around them helped each participant learn something new. David stated that he was always listening to and analyzing the music to find out how his contributions ‘fit’ into the music being played,
It can be pretty awesome sometimes just playing … in a group of people. You are harmonizing with one another and you are staying on time. It is hard to play a crescendo at the end of a piece without feeling intense to some degree unless you just hate the song.

Secondly, youth learn through listening to improvisations of others, and how the improvisation melds or disrupts the music being played. John exemplified how youth learn by listening to each others’ improvisations. As Ron stated, John learnt from Ron while they played together. John spoke of such learning

I really enjoy the fact that we can come together as friends and learn from each other, learn from each others mistakes and triumphs, talk to each other and get wisdom from each other. I feel like that is a very important aspect as a musician and as someone who is learning anything at all and especially through music.

Thirdly, it was observed that the youth learned from one another through discussions held after playing in groups. The youth discussed the ‘jam session’ and provided constructive criticism to each other. The content of constructive comments related to the improvement of the dynamics in the music. Finally, the youth learned from each other when they listened to music in the studio. Youth would learn through a ‘show and tell’ method. Youth would show others their favourite bands music by playing videos on YouTube. While listening to the songs, youth would often discuss the music style, the instruments and vocals, why they liked the particular song, as well as tell stories regarding the band. These stories would include experiences of seeing the band live, the techniques the band used that enables the creation of a specific rift played and stories about the band members’ lives. It was evident that youth not only learned about music but communication skills needed to describe their ideas were developed so that a forward-moving conversation could take place.

Program leader-youth learning
Youth expressed that they learned instruments, singing, recording, life skills, music industry knowledge, audio equipment set up, production, editing, and music theory from Program leaders. The instruments the youth learned to play included drums, guitar, piano and electric bass. Special interest in learning drums was noted by the majority of youth who were interviewed. Tom stated, “I started [lessons] right away because I have wanted to learn drums and my friends wanted me to play.” The teenagers reported that they learned drums at Fusion and emphasized that they did not have the opportunity to learn drums outside of the Music Program, given restrictions at school and at home. When asked if he would have learned drums without Fusion Ron explained, “Probably not. I’d almost go as far as say definitely not because I just don’t have the resources accessible.”

Learning percussion in high school is often given to only one student per class. Financial and noise level restrictions can often restrict young people from learning drums at home. Youth also expressed that learning about audio equipment and recording was an interesting aspect of Fusion that they wouldn’t have been able to experience otherwise. Learning about audio equipment enabled the youth to participate in preparation and operation of events held by Fusion such as the Haunted House. When asked about his contributions to Fusion, John said,

I worked with the Haunted House. The Haunted House is an event we do every year. I’ve worked on some of the sound stuff and worked with some sound effects, which is cool.

The participants learn life skills in the Music Program that help them in their everyday life, including meeting new people in avenues they may not have been able to in the past based on new skills such as the operation of recording equipment as exemplified above.
Charles spoke of getting to John while learning about recording, “He would sit in on my recording lessons and hang out … we would learn together, that’s how we became friends.” In the areas of building relationships with others and finding employment in music, the program enlightens the participants about the ups and downs. Luke talked about this in his interview,

I will sit with people a lot of times and if they are planning on sticking with music for their whole lives as a career then we will talk a lot about that and strategies … We are talking about what they will be doing with music as they go about their lives and things like that.

The teaching methods used by leaders include the use of exploratory discovery during non-programming time and the use of structured instruction during lessons based in demonstration and repetition.

During non-programming time (open jam), youth are given time to experiment with different instruments and musical techniques creating improvisational music. During open jam leaders often play with the youth to teach new techniques and help solidify certain skills the youth are learning consciously or passively. The leaders inspire youth by playing complicated rifts and sections of music to help inspire the youth and push them to new heights. Tom described the first time he played with Luke:

One day I heard him playing guitar. I was playing drums and then he just walked in and started playing. He was playing guitar. He was shredding on the guitar and then I just decided to play along with the beat. That is pretty much how all of that started with our friendship or at least how we got to know each other. I started playing the drums and then he started saying, no in seven [time signature] you should try doing this.

This speaks to how the leaders are trying to integrate themselves and act on the same level as the youth to become people the youth trust and can open up to, as well as learn things from.
Youth constantly ask questions about the music in order to improve and the leaders instruct in the techniques needed to play complicated phases of music. Stanley remembers that “It all started with a conversation and asking one question, can you teach me?” to Luke and their relationship grew from there. “I always ask a lot of questions to understand something and so it just kind of naturally works for me,” said Stanley referring to learning techniques and how he attempts to improve himself and his music. On multiple occasions it was observed that the leaders would encourage youth to experiment with the phases and techniques in new ways and incorporate these into the music in different ways.

The teaching methods used in private lessons are designed specifically around the interests and strengths of the individual student. These lessons are highly differentiated as each student has different needs and interests, “Every kid has a different need and they learn differently and so I try to cater to what they are obviously needing.” Methods range from the use of a structured scaffold intended to build the students prior skills onto as well as the use of exploratory methods to encourage creativity. In general, the methods tend to be based on skill level. For example, it was observed that youth at beginner levels tend to use a book that provides a scaffold for learning the necessary basic skills for performance of songs (usually popular music). Stanley mentioned that “When I dropped guitar to pick up piano … I had to start from the beginning of the book and catch up. I was learning all the basics”. In some cases, the leader teaches the youth without a book, as Luke explained,

I started out teaching to the book and that quickly changed after meeting more people with different needs. I think the first two or three lessons I started out with were all right from the book. Those kids are still to the book for the most part and
then as others come on they are at completely different places. They learn differently and that is how I have changed.

This often occurs when the leader is teaching an instrument they are comfortable playing themselves (guitar for both leaders currently) or when the books available for teaching the student are judged to be inadequate, as is the case for learning the drums. In these cases, the leaders create their own method for teaching interested youth.

Demonstration is a major teaching method used by the leaders during private lessons for the intermediate to advanced students. The demonstration process roughly follows this routine:

1) The leader plays the song on YouTube. Both the leader and youth listen to the song. The leader informs the youth of the chord progression in the song. If the youth is interested in figuring out the chord progression on their own, the leader will instead teach techniques on how to hear and differentiate the chords in a song.

2) Leaders demonstrate how to play the chord progression before the youth attempts playing unless the youth feels comfortable trying without a demonstration.

3) As the youth plays the song, the leader will correct any mistakes on the spot as they occur.

4) The youth then practices the song or chord progression until achieving in playing the song correctly and feel as though they have mastered the skills needed.

Harry described the process as well,

A big tool actually is YouTube, not for watching guitar tutorials on how to play things, but just to play the song. We just put a song up and try to figure it out. I really encourage people to use their ears as one of the main tools to get people to be able to lift their own songs, as apposed to having to use tools like tabs and all that to figure it out. I like to encourage people to be able to sit down and start playing the song without ever hearing the song before. That is really the goal where we want to get people.
For the youth that have acquired and developed the technique of playing by ear and show interest in furthering their skills, the leaders will teach music theory, I definitely won't start out teaching technique. There are some people who in time get the urge to learn that and they have a desire to become more proficient and so they will ask can we look at some techniques. First, the scales and chord progressions used in popular music are taught to the youth and then advanced techniques such as bending notes, fingered hammering, harmonics and double kicking are taught. In many cases, musical theory and musical techniques are integrated into teaching intermediate students, as advanced musical knowledge is often needed to learn and play popular music songs. Harry, above in Opportunity, describes the frame of mind he uses when planning and teaching a lesson to help the students learn both what they want, and what they need to know.

Relationships

The relationships the youth build with the leaders is important to learning in the Music Program. The leaders act as teachers, mentors and as friends to the youth. In special cases, the leaders become the youth’s role model. John explains his relationship with Harry: “[Harry] is a great guy and like my dad was never in the picture and so it is really good to have that male role model.” In general, it was observed that the leaders build relationships with youth by talking about music, fascinating youth by demonstrating their prowess in musicianship, providing advice and by exemplifying traits youth look for in role models.

Luke and Harry build relationships with the youth in different ways. Luke prefers to talk about music: “I see [talking about the youth’s careers in music] as mentoring … We are talking about what they will be doing with music as they go about their lives and
things like that.” He uses a common interest in music to build the relationship. He tells stories of his life as a producer in South Korea, his experiences of being in a band, and his taste in music. Luke’s strengths include his story-telling ability, his sense of style and his interest in multiple forms of music. Luke’s stories speak to the youth because of his ability to speak about relevant and interesting topics.

His body language, dress, musical identity and language reflect his personality, portraying softness with power and edge that fascinates the participants. This enables youth to establish a relationship with him quickly and easily. Interest in multiple forms of music and the music making process enables Luke to adapt to youths’ music preferences facilitating the creation of friendships through genuine enthusiasm. Stanley stated that, “I got fascinated with how [Luke] played guitar and piano and everything and asked him if I could learn.” Stanley went on to describe how his relationship with Luke developed by Luke telling stories about “how to manage a band and stuff like that”. By building relationships in this manner with the youth, Luke assisted the youth in their learning endeavours through inspiration.

In a similar fashion to Luke, Harry first establishes his relationship with his pupils by fascinating the youth. Harry demonstrates his musical skills in an effort to inspire the students. After a relationship is initiated, Harry, unlike Luke, delves deeper into the problems facing youth in their lives,

A lot of them have opened up about their lives and their personal relationships and skills. I have probably spent as much time teaching, or should I say conversing, about social situations as much as I have taught guitar and stuff like that. So many times they will be like ‘I really like this girl at school. What should I do? She said she wants to hang out. What do I say?’ Then we'll spend our entire lesson just talking about that.
Harry acts as a ‘counsellor’ for a number of the youth; he advises them in what he believes is proper action. His advice comes from his reflection on his own life as well as his knowledge of each individual person. Through conversation on issues from music to love, Harry builds a relationship based on deeper knowledge of one another.

Harry’s major strength is his ability to listen and ask questions that guide the youth to a solution. His ability to listen enables the creation of very deep relationships. Charles talked about how his relationship with Harry started “I saw how [Harry] would talk to [John] … [Harry] was really helpful to [John], I felt that he really cared about him. After that, I was able to open up to [Harry].” Harry aids youth in the development of assets and knowledge necessary for a successful life. These include self-confidence, communication and independence as well as teaching the musical skills necessary for the mastery of the art form.

**Barriers to learning**

Barriers to youths’ learning occur at Fusion’s Music Program. Barriers to learning usually manifest as shy or nervous behaviour. As will be discussed in the section on Flow, youth reported being nervous about others’ perceptions of their music. Playing or singing in front of others is often difficult for any student, thereby preventing the youth from learning how to play in a group and perform for a crowd. Nervousness manifests even in the most experienced musicians. Ron expressed concerns of what more experienced musicians thought of his musicianship. Lindsay also talked about her nerves, “I get nervous when there is a bunch of people in the room when I sing.” She continued by indicating her growing appreciation for how to perform while nervous:
I have grown a bit, getting used to people [listening to me sing]; although I am trying to get used to all the recording stuff. I am trying to get over my fear of singing in front of people who haven't heard me sing before.

At Fusion’s Music Program, the supportive learning environment helps mitigate the nerves and shy behaviour. In addition, as the youth become more experienced and confident, shy behaviour is reduced and nervousness overcome.

Inconsistent motivation to learn music is another barrier. Offering free lessons may be a contributing factor to lack of motivation. As expressed by Bobbie above in the section on challenges, the belief that without a financial value associated with the lessons, youth are not held accountable to consistent attendance may hold credence. The current Leaders reported suspending youth from lessons after inconsistent attendance or when they showed a lack of motivation to practice between lessons. The drop-in style of Fusion could also contribute to this inconsistent motivation. For drop-in youth, Fusion is a place to hang out and participate in an array of sporting and other activities with their friends.

Harry talked about this in his interview saying:

I think it came from getting discouraged by youth not showing up for their lessons and stuff like that. Then I started talking with other staff members and they were like yeah it is kind of the normal thing for a drop-in center. Most of the youth that I teach now are very punctual and active. They come every week, but I remember in the beginning stages I would book a song recording session with somebody and they would be so excited about it. I would spend three hours getting the drum set up and tuned properly and microphones up and have all the cables run nicely and the youth wouldn't show up and I was like wow! This kind of sucks. I did all this work for nothing. I started realizing that it is a drop-in center and so I need to be a little more relaxed with my approach to things and not so rigid. Maybe involve the youth in the set up in the first place and wait until they are there.

This reveals that even if youth are attending Fusion they often choose to continue socializing with friends instead of attending their scheduled lesson at the studio. Lastly, the leaders found that rigid teaching methods often decreased the motivation of the youth.
Rigid teaching methods often caused the content of the lessons to be perceived as not relevant to youth. It also limited the learning structures, which may not suit the student and would decrease their interest and motivation. Harry remembers that:

I just found that initially when I got started I started coming up with these documents with some plans and stuff like that. It has taken on so much more of a relaxed vibe for lessons. For a thirty-minute lesson, if they come in and want [to learn] guitar, it will be very structured. [Usually] I have an idea ready from the week before… I will have an idea of what I want to teach them, maybe a couple of resources listed down. It is like check out this video on YouTube or a video on my computer or whatever, but yeah it has definitely become more relaxed than it was at the beginning.

As the leaders perfected teaching, relaxed mentorship and differentiated lesson plans, the students’ motivation to learn seemed to increase and their motivation to practice and return to the Music Program consistently.

**Evidence of Positive Youth Development at Fusion’s Music Program**

The research shown in the literature review, provided evidence of asset development using the five ‘C’ categorical model as proposed by leading researchers in the field of positive youth development (Benson et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005). Contribution, a sixth ‘C’ was added to the conceptual framework after further inquiry into the Five C model (Lerner et al., 2005). Creativity was added to the model in order to test whether or not its addition to the Five C model was appropriate. The following narratives provide evidence of the developmental assets within the categories of confidence, connection, competence, caring, character, contribution, and creativity.

**Competence**

The development of youth’s competence, defined as a positive view of one’s actions in the domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational
(Lerner et al., 2005), was evidenced by the youth’s improvement in musical, social and cognitive skills. These improvements caused happiness and a feeling of achievement in the youth indicating competence learning was occurring. This is especially the case with Stanley as he learned a new song he said that, “not really being able to achieve much or get credit for it, when I achieved it I got the happy feeling knowing I had achieved it.” The most obvious improvements the youth were aware of occurred as they learned to play musical instruments.

During the focus group the youth agreed that they learned, “how to play instruments. That is a big one for sure. Okay, we learned how to play them properly.” Some youth developed confidence in single domains with regards to social actions, particularly in the realm of their communication with friends, family and the staff at Fusion. While interacting with the youth, the researcher found that through the work of the leaders, youth at Fusion have learned to critically think and analyze music. The researcher would often have conversations with the youth, which indicated that the youth had built opinions of the music they were listening to on solid criteria. While talking to Stanley about various sound tracks from movies he said that he “likes Howard Shore and Hans Zimmer because they are able to mix genres so well”. Ron’s comment regarding his own creation “It sounded like ass” indicating a degree of critical thinking. The youth’s actions of this critical thinking and analysis add to their existing cognitive competence.

Vocational competence in the form of Musical Development

The first Program leader Bobbie, who believed that the youth should “learn to play music, not just noise,” originally stressed improvements through musicology in order to “encourage them to make music.” Youth have developed from the basics with
tutelage to learn complicated parts of songs, build technique and learn the foundations of music theory. Youth who have highly proficient skills playing one instrument in one genre are particularly proud of beginning to transfer their skills either to another instrument or into different genres of music. John was pleased to learn the double bass after learning the electric bass and guitar originally in the rock music genre,

Just recently in the last year I started playing a lot of classical and I played double bass in the orchestra as well. That was kind of a huge jump from playing electric to double and it was a huge learning curve. Digging deeper into that, it was just a whole different challenge.

His knowledge of pentatonic scales learned on the electric bass and guitar enabled John to quickly learn jazz bass lines. Similarly David’s experience revealed how skills learned on the guitar have helped him with the basics of the violin. “I definitely understand guitar a lot better and I guess that could kind of apply to other instruments even. It has definitely honed in on my musical ear on the violin as well.” Many of the students have similar learning experiences to those of David and John where their competence level is aided.

An interesting technique that the youth were particularly proud of learning at Fusion Music Program is the training of a musical ear. Hearing pitch, chord changes, and the dynamics of the music is immensely important for a musician. As quoted above, by teaching songs without a written chord tablature or classical notation, the Program forces youth to learn the song using their ear. As the students grow in skill, they pick out the chord changes themselves; often identifying the exact chords before they check using tabs (a notation for guitars that indicates the chord changes of the songs) or classical notation. Training the youth in this manner has enabled composition of music by youth using the patterns or chord progressions they have heard and learned. To illustrate, ear training has enabled Charles to easily edit, mix and produce music. “I was surprised to
discover how good my [musical] ear was,” Charles exclaimed happily. He is now able to hear the chord progression and dynamics the musicians use to help songs keep an audience interested. Given that rock and jazz music (the basis of today’s popular music) are often improvisational in form, learning to hear the chord changes is of vital importance to the budding musician. This ability enables a person to play or sing in key while soloing and when with others.

Youth also learn by playing with other youth, through practice, lessons, and by taking risks. As talked about above Ron and John spoke highly of the importance of playing with others to improve skills. It was observed that they learned new skills by imitating, abstracting, and building upon other band members’ improvisations. Eventually, by “playing off each other,” as stated by Ron, the youth were able to build their own musical style. David emphasized the need for practice to improve his musical skills, “I think almost any musician who has had some practice [is] good on a technical level,” whereas Lisa thought that risk taking was how she learned new skills. On the topic she said, “Yeah I think it makes me more of an artist. It kind of gives me like that secure thing or whatever because that is kind of how I found my voice, by taking risks.” The diversity of development patterns among the youth in creating a musical identity reveals how everyone becomes competent differently and how Fusion encourages these different learning styles.

All the youth were proud of learning through lessons from the leaders of the Program. The leaders taught the basics of musicianship as well as advanced techniques, such as double stepping the drums or harmonics on the guitar. Differences in competence development patterns among students enabled the Program and youth to flourish together.
Development of Competence in the Social and Cognitive Domains

Youth development of competence in social domains was evident by their positive view of their social actions and interactions. Satisfaction in the friendships and other relationships the youth built during their time in the Program was reported by many of the youth. Charles stated that “I am generally happy here … I have made friends that are important to me”. Among some members of the Music Program, an awareness of their development of communication and conflict management skills was accompanied by satisfaction. The communication skills the youth learned enabled them to make friends and create positive connections. The youth’s use of their communication skills will be discussed further in the connection section.

Social competence building was shown by the development John displayed. Through his relationship with Harry, John was able to develop conflict management skills. Harry helped John deal with his problems, especially in his family life. John was able to create a positive view of his actions with regards to his future, family, friends and Fusion’s community:

I've been working on, especially in the last year, trying just to break down walls and talk about stuff from the past, which is difficult right? Of course, but it is just like all of that is just stupid stuff with my family. Sometimes people think, oh it is not a big deal, but to me it was a big deal because I was there. I was right there and it affected me, especially since we were like grades seven, eight and nine. You then try to build these walls and so I am just trying to break that down and kind of let what I am impassioned about shine through.

This development of competence would not have been possible outside of the Music Program as John’s ability to work with the emotions through music is unique.

John’s positive outlook was also associated with his cognitive development. The Music Program at Fusion enabled youth to develop their critical thinking and reflection
skills. Critical thinking development came in the form of judgement of the aesthetic in music. The youth in the Music Program found enjoyment in developing judgements of this musical taste, performance and own compositions. John, Harry and the researcher often watch a professional classical bass player, symphonies, and rock bands critiquing the performers style, sound and technique. It was an enjoyable experience for all of them.

Through the program, youth develop a positive view of their reflective nature. John developed an ability to reflect on his own actions towards others in the past and described his making amends in the above quote. He now believes his ability to reflect and resolve conflict has resulted in improved decision-making skills. The development of the youth’s competence within vocational, social, and cognitive domains enabled the youth to build on assets within the other six ‘C’s.

**Confidence**

At Fusion Music Program, youth develop confidence in three main ways. Confidence is defined as an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one’s global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs (Lerner et al., 2005). The first way confidence is built occurs with pride occurring in the individual’s achievements. Secondly, by growing a sense of self worth within themselves through conversation with others. Lastly, by learning new skills, receiving encouragement and socializing both from other peers and from leaders.

In general, as the youth achieve competence in music, they begin to develop a sense of pride, achievement and confidence in these areas of competence. The youth expressed pride in their accomplishments. Stanley felt, “Proud. Mainly pride because I accomplished it,” referring to learning The Hobbit Song from the movie Lord of Rings:
The Fellowship of the Ring. The youth’s endeavours ranged from learning new songs played by ear to receiving awards at Fusion. Stanley exemplifies how quickly a student can become proud. In only six months of participation at the Music Program, Stanley had learned how to play the piano and was currently composing a cover of a popular song with leader Luke’s assistance. Many of the other youth reported a similar good feeling while at Fusion Music Program. Feelings of “security,” “freedom” and “general happiness” about oneself while at the studio were reported as well.

Encouragement from others at the studio in the form of compliments and support has enabled the youth at Fusion Music Program to at minimum begin to overcome their anxiety regarding the value of their music if not really start to have confidence in their work and abilities. Multiple youth demonstrate the value of encouragement while developing self-confidence. Lindsay reported that compliments from others, “help me boost up my confidence” enabling her to sing in front of an audience full of strangers, which she never would have done previously. Another example of how confidence is built, Lisa had recently composed a creative cover of Kim Taylor’s song ‘Build Me Up’ and had an opportunity to talk to Kim about it. During the phone call, Kim complimented Lisa’s cover of the song by stating that Lisa’s song was one of the best covers she had ever heard. Kim added that she “particularly liked the ending.” Lisa was speechless during the phone call as she was having an unexpected talk with one of her favourite artists. Afterwards, Lisa was ecstatic and overflowing with confidence. Lisa expressed,

I was just really surprised about how [Kim] said it was the best one that she heard and how she loved it and stuff like that. She is famous and that is what she does for a living and she is telling me that I am good and so I must be good.
There was immense gratitude towards the acknowledgement of her prowess as a musical composer. This helped increase Lisa’s self-confidence.

The research revealed that building a sense of pride and self-confidence helped the youth understand their self-worth. As the students learned musical skills, they became less nervous while playing in front of others. Lindsay talked about how creative actions helped build her confidence:

Every time I go [to Fusion] I listen to music, sing, just draw or write different things …it helped me boost my confidence and not worrying about what people think. Just as long it is good to you then it is good.

Confidence enabled the youth to become aware of the importance of being genuine and doing things for themselves and not others. This was especially the case with the talented young musician, John. Through self-reflection, John had come to realize that self worth comes from within. He began to change his self-image through conversations with Program leaders and his peers,

I feel like if you are comfortable in your own and you are okay with who you are then you shouldn't have to have a sense of belonging because. Let me rephrase. Other people shouldn't make you feel like you have any more or any less worth. It starts with you. If you are confident and you say hey this is me, this is what I am and who I am and I am okay with it and I am happy with it, like you love yourself as you would love someone else. I feel like if you don't respect yourself and you don't care about yourself or you don't love yourself; that might sound selfish, but then you have a hard time doing that for other people. It is like I said. I've been working on, especially in the last year, trying just to break down walls and talk about stuff from the past.

He credits Fusion as being essential to the process of transformation he experiences and subsequently his building of self-confidence. Through this process John was able to build the skills and relationships he needed to achieve his personal sense of self-worth.

Connection
Fusion Music Program allows youth to develop connections in the form of positive bonds with people and institutions. This is reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship (Lerner et al., 2005). Youth were all in different stages of developing connections while at Fusion. The stages were classified into specific areas: peacocking, building relationships with the Program leaders, making friends, building a community within Fusion Music Program, and building a strong relationship with Fusion as a home.

Peacocking is a term used when youth demonstrate their value to others through the use of music, just like a peacock attracting a mate through a flashy presentation of colors. One youth’s story at Fusion illustrates the use of peacocking to attract new friends. Tom’s reasons for wanting to learn to play the drums stemmed from a desire to be seen as cool or popular,

I use it to show my friends. ... I mean when I say friends I have a little bit of friendship with the really popular kids and I'm not that popular at school. I try and get up to that level, the same level as they are. Popularity is important in school, in high school. I use it to try and gain popularity.

He believes that demonstrating his prowess with the drums will attract others to him. In turn, he feels his peers will value him and therefore become his friends. By teaching new skills and providing an environment that encourages youth to participate in musical activities, the Music Program allows adolescents to connect with others through a demonstration of their skills.

Youth built on their ability to connect with others by crafting relationships with staff. Initially, the youth are fascinated by the Program leaders. Youth hear and see the leaders play during open jam and aspire to play music in a similar fashion. The Program
leader typically initiate dialogue with the students. The youth and staff members talk about common interests regarding music or other subjects. These conversations occur as though chatting with friends. John talked about conversing over common interest,

[Luke] and I are we get along quite well too. I feel it is just the common interest that we all share here. I have a friend [Ron]. He comes to this program as well and he doesn't work. We share a lot of the same musical tastes and a lot of IT things we share as well. This is because of coming here and meeting here and talking about music and it just lead into a friendship. It is pretty special that music can bring people together like that.

Through these experiences, the youth learn communication skills, which are needed to connect with others. In some instances, the relationship grows and deepens. John and Harry demonstrate how a leader and teenager can create a special bond. The two became close quickly as John told stories about his life and troubles. As the relationship deepened, Harry became a teacher, mentor, friend, and counsellor. Harry listened intently and began to give advice as a friend and counsellor. When talking about his relationship with Harry, John stated that, “He is like one of my dearest friends. I feel like I can open up to him and talk to him for whatever reason.” The connection the two created enabled John to develop positively in all the areas of the seven ‘C’s.

Staff members provide the opportunity for youth to connect with each other. Bobbie spoke of introducing youth to other youth who shared a common interest in music, “I remember I used to put bands together,” as the youth got along very well. Luke and Harry were more subtle in their technique of introducing youth to each other by providing a safe and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged youth to introduce themselves to each other and express themselves freely. It was observed that the ‘show and tell’ method of learning used by the youth while listening to music (from YouTube often) enabled the youth to learn to communicate effectively with each other. As they
learned communication skills they developed the ability to form connections and make new friends.

The youth who participate in Fusion’s Music Program were able to connect with each other on a deeper level by making friends. All the interviewees had made at least one friend while participating at Fusion. “I get to hang out with my friends and I also get to make new friends and meet new staff.” Lindsay said while talking about why it is fun to come to Fusion’s Music Program. Even Charles, who regularly only comes to Fusion for music lessons said, “yeah I have made friends here, [John] is an example”. Youth making connections is achieved in two major ways: 1) finding a common interest in music with other members of the Program; 2) the provision of a safe place to socialize with each other at Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre.

The studio provided youth with an opportunity to create music together. This adds a new element to the connections made with others at the Music Program. Brothers David and Paul learned how to play the guitar at Fusion and started playing together. The siblings are now able to socialize through a new medium. David enjoys the challenge that playing in a group brings. While discussing ‘jamming’ he indicated that it is a communal act whereby the music produced by one musician is only a part of the larger puzzle:

I think when you are playing with someone else you kind of get some, kind of develop some experience outside of yourself. I think that could apply to almost any field, music or otherwise. If you are just doing things on your own then you are not really getting the same out of it as you would if you were playing or working with other people. I’d say I enjoy jamming with other people. Just also the sound is more whole. You can play guitar all you want, but if you have a guitar and a bass and then add drums and any amount of other instruments it sounds more cohesive. You can get a more coherent kind of sound.

While playing in a group David realized that music he produced should fit the music produced by the others. The listening skills necessary to achieve this feat are only
acquired through practice. Paul discussed that learning guitar enabled him to play with his brother, “I like playing with my brother, it’s cool.” He found playing with David was fun as he was able to hang out with his brother on a new level. Both siblings found that the bigger sound created while playing together added depth to the music.

Playing music together can be a form of celebration. This is especially true in blues based improvisational forms such as Jazz and Rock and Roll. Ron told a story of such a celebration occurring on Bobbie’s last day as the Music Program’s leader,

So it was like the first real time that I realized I had actually made friends here and that we actually all had something in common, and we were all celebrating what we had in common because the one guy was moving on and doing his own thing from that point on.

During the interview Ron mentioned that it was during this jam session, that he realized the new friendships he made at the program were of value as it enabled him to part of the Ingersoll community. Playing together was a method that deepened and strengthened the friendships that he built at Fusion.

The youth expressed sentiments of the Music Program being like a home or a place of belonging:

I get a sense of like home. We spend a whole bunch of time here and so I feel like it becomes a home and you get some different things as well. I feel like this become my second home. I spend more time here than I do at my house. It is the home feeling and the warmth, like you know the place a lot. You've been there and you have a lot of memories there.

These sentiments, in conjunction with the support the youth receive from their peers, using music as a celebration, and deep friendships that are built at the studio, indicate towards the creation of a community. Through the use of music youth are able to build the assets necessary to connect with other people. The youth who added to the community at Fusion through music found that the program provided a sanctuary for
them; a place where they can unwind and relieve the stress caused by school and family life.

**Character**

The following sub-theme discusses evidence regarding the youth’s character development. In other words, the development of respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviour, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity (Lerner et al. 2005). During observations and interviews, only a few instances of youth building character were readily obvious. However, in the following few narratives instances of character were shown.

The development of character at Fusion Music Program was largely driven by the leaders. As a Program leader, Bobbie had high behavioural expectations of youth, including an inclusive attitude, freedom of expression, non-judgmental attitude, acceptance and equality for all the participants. These expectation have been passed down to the current Program leaders. Harry, one of the current leaders, understands that the above expectations revolve around respecting others and one’s self. He embodies respect by providing all youth the opportunity to learn and by using positive language at all times. Harry reported that he never heard negative language and that the relationship he built with his students enabled him to keep misbehaviour to a minimum,

I don't think there has ever really been any issues in here. As far as bullying goes or name calling or misbehaviour, there have been a couple of people I have kicked out because they were beating the drums to crap and I would be like guys could you just not destroy them? We would like to keep the drums for other people as long as we can and they just keep going. Then I am like excuse me. You heard what I said and they'd be like ‘oh whatever’. You get the odd [person], but most people who come to the music room are regulars here and I have a good relationship with them.
The disrespect shown by youth for the instruments and studio equipment and bringing food or drink into the studio was not tolerable for Harry.

Harry mentioned that he found that many youth at Fusion outside of the Music Program were disrespectful towards peers, especially at the skate park. An experience during observations illustrates how a positive culture of respect is important. While socializing with youth from the Music Program outside of Fusion, a victim of verbal harassment by other members of Fusion came to file a complaint. The abuser was of African-American decent. Even though the victim was angry, the language used to file his complaint was disrespectful and racist. Ron, one youth from the Music Program sitting with a group nearby, expressed revulsion at the language used. Given the potentially violent nature of the situation, the leader decided not to correct the racial slur and instead defused the situation smoothly. The revulsion expressed by Ron revealed his higher moral character and his courage and respect for the equality of all individuals regardless of race.

Discipline is often required to become a successful musician (Heble, 2000, Gladwell, 2008). Harry took this notion to heart and believed that discipline was important as revealed by John, “He teaches about discipline through music and the passion because it is important.” Furthermore, Harry stated, “I expect them to have enthusiasm and motivation” when talking about the youth who come for lessons, indicating that attitude and work ethic are important to him. The discipline learned while at the studio at Fusion has enabled him to develop a strong work ethic and add to his character and help him develop respect for other people.
Lisa, while speaking of her cover of Kim Tyler’s song “Build You Up”, mentioned her desire to become a role model for other young girls going through hardship: “I want to help them because I know what they are going through.” The Music Program provides a medium for her to achieve this dream through the possibility of peer-to-peer mentorship. By granting youth the opportunity to lead by example, they have the chance to develop leadership skills at Fusion.

Ron demonstrated his leadership skills by advocating for himself and others when experiencing a perceived downturn in the Music Program. Eric, the Program leader at the time, was concentrating on karaoke style recording at the expense of instrumental music time. As a result, many of the previous participants left the program. Ron, instead of leaving, talked to Eric to voice his opinion about the state of the music program. When no change occurred, he petitioned management to change the programming times:

Back when [Eric] was here—I don’t want to put the guy in a bad light—but he kind of ran the program into the ground, but before he came in with [Bobbie], this place was always full; there were always people playing, doing everything, playing music, recording, but once [Eric] came in, the shift focused away from music to just manufacturing and not actually playing or writing music. It came to recording covers, and you’d have groups of ten or eleven girls come in and take a song off YouTube and then every single one of them would have to make a cover of that song. The room would be booked solid with people using the room for absolutely nothing.

When asked what he has done,

We complained a lot to management and they never really did anything. They just said ‘oh well, there’s nothing we can do’. I think [Ian] and I talked to [Eric] at one point and he said that he would try to make it better and things did get a little better. But we more or less tried to avoid the Music Program as much as we could because it was just abysmal at the time.
Small changes occurred slowly over time. Ron understood that the program was limited by time and space and demands from all participants. By voicing his opinion and advocating, Ron strengthened his character and displayed courage and fortitude.

**Caring**

Caring is defined as a sense of sympathy and empathy for others by Lerner et al. (2005). An expansion of the conception of caring was necessary for indicators to be observed. The conception was expanded to include the attributes associated with caring. Empathy was observed to have developed in only a couple of individuals. Empathetic communication during improvisation provides the most positional evidence for the development of caring within youth at Fusion Music Program.

**Attributes that indicate the development of caring**

The current framework within positive youth development research conceives caring as a manifestation of empathy. The researcher found little evidence of youth developing assets in the caring category. By expanding the conception of caring to include the development of attributes and emotions that allow a person to value others, evidence emerged that indicates that the youth in the Music Program are caring of themselves and others. These attributes, feelings and emotions include remembrance, love, empathy, and management of anger due to loss.

Even though he was disqualified for an interview due lack of time in attendance at the Program, Jeff’s story demonstrates remembrance and caring. Jeff remembered his grandfather by playing on his grandfather’s guitar. Interested in celebrating the memories, Jeff asked to learn songs that his grandfather had played in the past. He had particular interest in learning songs from the band ‘The Eagles’ and other folk singers of
the 1960’s and 1970’s. Jeff prescribed value to the guitar and songs as he often portrayed his grandfather in a positive light. The leaders at Fusion encouraged Jeff to learn music his grandfather had played. These actions indicate the development of caring, which was channelled in a productive and positive way to celebrate happy memories.

For Tom, remembrance of a person he cared about resulted in manifestations of another strong emotion, anger. His reaction when he hears the song is to, “Go [into] my room and just punch everything or I go in my room and listen to that song until I fall asleep.” Music enables him to release the anger and help him feel “free,” while playing the drums. By funnelling these strong emotions into his playing, Tom is able to proactively manage his emotions. By using music to manage his grief Tom’s actions indicate that the Music Program helps certain youth develop grief management techniques. Strong emotional release by youth indicates an attachment to a lost individual which requires empathy, sympathy and love which are attributes of caring.

The management and discovery of love, an emotion in which empathy is intertwined, is best illustrated by John’s composition process. John had begun the process of writing a love song dedicated to his girlfriend, who was moving away for school. In his interview, John talked about his reasoning for writing the song. He was abstracting the guitar part from The Beatles’ tune “Blackbird”. Abstracting is a process Jazz artists use when re-imagining Jazz and Pop standards. John created a pretty, yet intense guitar part to accompany his lyrics. He hoped his song would help express the love he felt, not just the sentimental feelings of a teenage soul,

I am actually in the process of writing a song for my girlfriend. I just want it to be really special. I want to share with her what I am passionate about … I am just trying to make it not super cheesy or anything, but it is getting really cheesy. You
feel these emotions. People say I am too young to love, but I genuinely love her. Mitch found that music was the medium that enabled him to express his love for his girlfriend. Using love, remembrance and grief attributed to loss as indictors of caring enabled the researcher to explore aspects of caring that are not encompassed in current definition.

**Empathy Developed as a Result of the Music Program**

Only one instance of empathy was revealed during the short time observing the youth at Fusion. During the development of empathy in a youth, the learning and communication structures at Fusion were again key. Charles demonstrated empathy towards his friend, developed while socializing at Fusion Music Program. By feeling for a friend who was in trouble and subsequently helping the individual, Sean demonstrated his empathy towards the student. Sean talked about, “feeling deep emotions towards the student,” as well as an urge “to help [his] friend through,” his plight. The structure of the Music Program enabled him to develop the attributes needed to be empathetic; the mentorship, friendship, and encouragement for his curiosity enabled him to build new connections with others, helped him to learn in a self-directed manner, and reinforced that respect for others is important.

**Empathy Practiced through Playing Improvisational Music in a Group**

While playing improvisational music in a group, a unique circumstance arose where empathetic communication was necessary to incorporate the expressions of each musician involved. For the members of Fusion Music Program, musical expression is often an introspective process. When improvising in a group, musical expression needs to
become an interpersonal form of communication in order to play together. Playing as a group allowed the youth to create deeper connections.

The researcher’s experience improvising with a group of youth demonstrates how empathy is practiced during musical performance within a group. After completing an interview with a student, I entered the studio and found a group of youth improvising music over a blues progression. It was evident that the musicians were listening to each other and adapting in order to create a beautiful sound. I picked up my trumpet and started to play using the melody and progression the group had started with. I could hear the musicians creating conversations by speaking in musical phrases. Building upon or abstracting another players rift or rhythmic gesture. While playing, I could feel the emotion being expressed by the different musicians. The expressions complemented each other, indicating that the musicians in the room were adapting and changing their expressions to match others. I found that this was a form of empathy in practice, as in order to appropriately match to others expressions I had to envision and practice what the others were feeling.

**Contribution**

Contribution was formulated by Lerner et al., (2005) to account for the youth’s participation or involvement in the youth’s own community. Youth who participate in the Music Program have outside factors that interrupt their ability to help contribute to the larger community of Ingersoll as a whole. These factors include a lack of opportunity to play in concerts, shy personalities of the youth, and lack of transportation to community events outside their immediate area.
Some youth at Fusion are able to contribute to the community through musical performances and volunteering for events held at Fusion Youth Technology and Activity Center. During an interview with Lisa, she talked about her experience playing at local establishments in the Ingersoll area,

  I do like these open microphones. I haven't been in a while, but I usually go twice a month. I will just sing. I will do a new cover of a song. It is pretty fun and then I get feedback from the audience. They will say, well usually they will say, ‘oh that was good’. It is like a regular thing with the same people every time. Some nights they will be like ‘that wasn't as good as last time, but it was still good’.

By participating in a local establishment’s ‘open mic night’, Lisa was able to highlight her musical skills to an audience. Lisa enjoys playing for others but has found transportation to the venues to be a challenge.

Another youth, John, has played for an audience. Harry invited John to play with him at a venue in Ingersoll,

  Harry and I did a benefit. We played at a benefit and played six or so songs. It was the first time I actually sang in front of people. There were only maybe 70 or so people there so that wasn't very many, but it was pretty nerve racking. He was like really supportive and ‘yep you are going to do fine’. Yes I felt like it was risky, but I thought I sounded like crap, but great. They say I sounded good and so it was encouraging.

Although he was nervous at first, John was able to build on his confidence level through his relationship with Harry and has been able to increase it further since that instance. John and Charles were able to contribute to the community by helping set up the audio equipment at Fusion’s Haunted House held annually. Both youth were eager to contribute and volunteer, “The Haunted House is an event we do every year. I've worked on some of the sound stuff and worked with some sound effects, which is cool. It was a cool contribution.” Keen to participate in future events at Fusion, John stated, “I wish I contributed more honestly,” speaking of Fusion’s community and the events held there.
Charles had similar sentiments. He is aware that his skill set with audio equipment is not common and expresses a desire to continue recording and producing as a hobby to better Ingersoll’s community, “It is fun to work with recording equipment at my age … I don’t know of anywhere else that has a studio like this … I would like to do it more often” he said. However, both youths expressed their doubts surrounding contributions in the future, as opportunities to contribute to their community are rare. John indicates that skill and experience is a barrier to his contribution.

Learning about the equipment and how to use it and how to make it sound good I feel like is really cool. It is something else that I would like to do. … I wish I could help set stuff up and move stuff around, but I don't know enough about it to do anything about it
Creativity

The development of creativity, defined as the process and product of crafting novel artefacts, in the youth at Fusion occurs through a number of practices. By trying new musical instruments, different disciplines and by combining their technical skills, youth explore music. They imagine new forms of sound and music, practicing their creativity. By taking risks youth learn to create music through composition and improvisation. The final process youth use to rehearse their creative skills is development of their expressions by training their aesthetic artistry. These skills were all demonstrated by youth at the Music Program as demonstrated through interviews and observations.

Exploration of Music as a Form of Creative Practice

Exploration of Different Musical Styles

The youth and staff at Fusion found that the exploration and exposure to new forms and styles of music provides a basis for everyone’s creative works. During the focus group, the youth expressed the advantages of having two instructors’ divergent styles in terms of both exposure to differences in musical styles and creative processes,

Luke and Harry have a ton of differences in their playing and I think that kind of makes the program even better. Having two teachers and having the ability to play any variety I want I feel like kind of opens up a lot of creative opportunities for you.

The youth at the focus group agreed that exposure to a wide variety of music created an environment that produced choices of music genre and style with resounding “yeah” when asked if they agree. This encouraged youth to learn new skills necessary to enhance their ability to create,
Yeah it usually goes more towards, if I create something it sounds a bit country or a bit more to the rock side … It is just something that you kind of explore and you are still kind of figuring out.

Stanley noted during his interview when asked about what genres he likes to emulate when composing. The endless music choices available to staff and youth enable all participants to learn new forms of music. Nearly all the participants talked about exploring different kinds of music through performance, listening or composing. Evident in the case of Ron and his friends learning heavy metal music together,

Normally my style of music is kind of like classic rock or kind of punk rock sort of deal, but back a few years ago now, a few guys and I that I met in here, we kind of became friends and they were huge metal-heads like death metal-heads sort of like hey, let’s form a band. They wanted to play the death metal kind of stuff so I kind of tried something new along the lines of that death metal style drumming, the whole double-kick that fills the room. That was fun and interesting I guess. I never really drummed up until that point so I learned drums and learned a whole new genre all in one go.

Lisa described how she explored her own music tastes through listening to music,

I just like listening to all kinds of things and finding out what I like. When I was growing up I always listened to whatever my parents put on. Then I got to an age where it was like I want to find out what I like.

These examples of youth exploring music is the first step in building creativity as it provides youth with method of making something new while performing, manufacturing and composing music. On a personal note, as an amateur musician, I still aspire to move between different genres of music on instruments and believe knowledge and proficiency in an array of genres is necessary to develop new sounds and styles.

**Exploring through Experimentation and Imagination**

Youth also explored music through simple forms of experimentation. While participating at Fusion’s Music Program John developed a trial and error process to discover what chords best fit together in order to create sounds that were pleasing to the
ear. He described the process to be “a lot of trial and error, getting feedback from people and saying hey how do you think this sounds?”

Stanley used a similar process to find new rifts for contemporary songs, “I start out by making any random tune and playing around with it.” He went on to say that “One time on the drums I started randomly drumming on it and I found myself repeating a new tune. I just kind of stuck with the tune, fine tuned it” Stanley also explained that he changed the rift of the song to match his mood.

The way I see it, it is all based around my emotions. So if I am in a happy mode it will most likely be a happier rift. If it is more of a sad mood it will go more towards a deeper feeling I guess would be the best way to explain it.

It was observed that in some cases he changes the chord progression to match a modified tempo. Stanley also modified chord changes by playing the diminished 5th and dominant 5th chords instead of the major 7th chord to change the mood of the song.

Robert’s trial and error process while exploring music enabled him to re-imagine popular rock songs.

David experimented by imagining new additions or subtractions from the chord progression while creating new music. On the guitar a single chord can be played in different forms or fingering patterns and strummed or plucked at different intervals. By mixing different fingering patterns and harmonics and chords, David found that the music became more interesting,

I have explored a lot with the different harmonics on the guitar, both natural and pinched harmonics and just getting better at it. Also I am trying things where, the one thing I like to do that I am sure other people do it, but I kind of just happened upon it. You bend one string. Rather than bending it up towards the other string you bend it down towards the string below and then I kind of hit both strings at the same time and then I bend them both at the same time. It creates a really neat sound. I have been doing that for a while. I would say that probably qualifies. Other than that in the way of musical exploring I experiment with different chords
and how they sound together. I certainly know a classic chord progression like “G” to “D” and then back to “G” and stuff like that.

Along with these explorations, he would pluck single notes outside the normal notes prescribed by a chord, but within the key of the signature or scale of the tune. David found that placing these notes in specific spots creates interesting rhythms and melodies. He would subtract from the chord by muting a specific note in the chord. This technique, popularized by Edge the guitarist from the band U2, can create interesting tones (a more open or airy sound) used in popular rock tunes. By using his imagination and musical knowledge of pentatonic, major and minor scales, rhythm and chord progressions, David was able to create what he believed to be interesting music.

These youth used very different techniques, but both explored their creative natures. Stanley and David pushed their creative processes related to the exploration and creation of music, thereby expanding their ability to be creative.

**Exploration of New Musical Processes**

Youth explored new musical processes through learning and creating music. For the youth at Fusion, learning new instruments was common. Learning at Fusion was often conducted in an exploratory manner using trial and error as well as experimentation. Drums were the instrument many of the participants mentioned as the new instrument they learned. Even leaders Luke and Harry mentioned that the drums were new to them when they started working at Fusion,

Kind of like how do I grow creatively as an artist working here? I haven't played drums very much until I got here. Having a drum set at work that is always open for me to screw around on is always really great. Sitting down with so many other kids who are a lot better than me at the drums or any of the other instruments that is always good for growing and learning. I have gotten way better at drums just from watching other people and seeing what they can do.
Creation of music through composition and recording was also a new creative practice for the students. The more advanced musicians started composing as result of their teachings at Fusion. Composing new songs or creating novel covers of popular songs is common for these young musicians and songwriters. Tom talked about creating a new beat on the drums:

Oh yeah I created a beat here. … The two toms on the drum kit I kick the snare and go (taps his foot) and I keep that beat on the drums and I just hit the two toms a bunch of times. (He demonstrates.) And then I hit the two crashes and go duh or (cymbal sound) and it hit them both pretty much at the same time.

In addition, John talked about the advantages of using the recording studio for composition purposes

I just really find the recording sessions fun. You kind of just get to be creative. You have all this equipment and software and there are really no boundaries to what you can do. It is included with your $5.00 membership and so you can take all the time you need or take as much time on one specific thing, so you can really make it your own and focus on what you are passionate about with your recordings.

It was also observed that creative endeavours using the recording and editing equipment was prevalent at Fusion Music Program.

The youth build on their art form using the power of the professional level editing suite they have access to on site. Changing the music by adding effects to songs and mixing the voices in a song increases the youth’s creative nature. Sometimes youth have even created music videos of their favourite song. Lisa created a music video of her cover of “Build You Up” in collaboration with other youth. Arranged by a Program leader at Fusion, Lisa and group of youth filmed, edited and produced a music video. Youth participated in all aspects of the production, in an effort to display Lisa’s creative vision.
These examples of musical exploration are innately creative endeavours and therefore allow the staff and youth to practice creativity.

By combining techniques, genres, and ideas while developing a personal style or composing songs, the youth at Fusion Music Program practice a type of creativity often used by musicians and composers. John was finding it difficult to meld classical and jazz bass line and melodies into traditional rock chord progressions in his compositions. John was working towards creating a novel but pleasing sound.

I am really trying to make music that is easy to listen to, but sometimes it is hard to be creative and use interesting chord phrasings or interesting melodies and make it sound good. I am really trying to find the medium there where you can have something that is unique and something that is cool, but also marketable and able to be listened to.

Lisa preferred to cover songs by mixing in folk dynamics, country chord progressions and R&B sounds. She achieved this by using her own voice and adding dimensions to the music in the editing process. This is usually achieved by adding sounds (drums, strings and horn sections) into the original recording of her instrumentals and voices.

Other musicians at Fusion preferred to meld instrumental techniques to create new rifts. For example, David combined Jazz and Rock and Roll guitar techniques to build his improvised solos while playing in a group. Through the use of pentatonic scales, the Blues heavily influenced David’s style. With these techniques, David created an intriguing, lyrical and seductive form of music. Charles had a more cerebral method when producing music. He liked “to mix a few ideas together while editing”. Playing with edit tools that change the sound of the instruments, position the voices from right to left speakers, tune the tones of vocals and instruments, and add fade and sustain to the voices that were recorded, created the sounds he sought to achieve. In this way, Charles
discovered ways to create interesting sounds. The youth at Fusion Music Program who combined genres, techniques or ideas practised creative processes enabling them to develop skills used by creative people.

Exploration of music through trial and error, experimentation and combining musical qualities aided the youth of Fusion’s Music Program in producing art that departed from convention. Creative practices to compose and produce music that diverges from formulaic form and content was used by many youth at Fusion.

As quoted in the above section on Learning, Ron, a skilled musician, collaborated as a member of a metal band, helping their musical composition and production. He proposed a fun exercise that would enable the band to learn and overcome the challenges of the recording process. The group of youth composed a song, recorded and edited it through experimentation and combing processes. The final result was a song that combined metal instrumentals with sound effects used in a way not conventionally used in the music industry. This song broke conventional rules by editing vocals and instrumentals until they were unrecognizable.

Like I said earlier, when those guys started the death metal-type band that was kind of a major experiment. I also kind of experimented in manufacturing pop style music; that’s something I never did before, I guess like working with synthesizers and drum machines and all that. That was interesting.

Ron implied that the song sounded like “complete ass” but that he had fun creating it and learned about the production process while doing it. He attributed the open culture at the Music Program for the freedom to complete this project. The youth at Fusion Music Program are able to learn and have fun by creating unconventional music.

**Taking Risks and Creativity**
For the musicians at Fusion risks mainly manifested as psychological and/or sociological. For many of the youth, musical creative action (composition, performance, or improvisation) is perceived as risky. Negative judgement from their peers was a common fear of the youth. Thus, performance, improvisation, and composition are all risky as the perceived negative effects of their peers’ judgement are ominous. At Fusion Music Program negative judgements of youth’s creative endeavours are not only rare, the creative actions of the members are often admired by others. Thus, taking risks at Fusion Music Program results in a boost of confidence as well as a creative product in the form of a composed and/or performed songs or improvisations.

In order to take such risks, courage is needed. Two members of the Music Program demonstrated how they overcome their shyness in order to take risks. Lisa and John have both developed qualities allowing them to role model risk-taking to others. They demonstrate boldness and a deeper understanding of themselves. Being bold allows them to stand out, while their sense of self enables them to be unique. Both musicians described the need to be bold and unique during the creative process when asked about the risks they take at Fusion. The way they each personified these qualities was different. Lisa was overt in her boldness; her gothic style of dress and diva like attitude was always juxtaposed against her soft voice and lyrical musical preference. Lisa stressed being identifiable through their music, “Once you hear the beginning of the song you know who it is kind of thing and I want to be able to do that just like they do.” John’s boldness was subtle; with a modest attitude, he used his music as his brazen outlet for his individuality, thereby achieving a unique and bold art form. John talked about music as outlet for his individuality while discussing why creativity is important to him.
If you don't come across in the music that you are playing then I don't really see the point at all. If you are just taking a course for information and just playing concrete things then I feel like you are kind of playing somebody else' and you are kind of faking it. You are kind of putting that mask on. It is really important to let what you know come out in your music and let that music be special because it is coming from you and not from anybody else.

These quotes indicate that these youth at the Program agreed that risk-taking through creative action encouraged their growth as artists and as developing adults.

**The Role Expression and Aesthetic in the Development of Creativity**

Expression and an understanding of aesthetics are essential in any creative art form. For the youth at Fusion, aesthetic and expression are intertwined. Aesthetic and expression were revealed to be most interrelated for John and Stanley. For both these youth, their expression is delivered through the aesthetics they create in their art forms.

As discussed in the Caring section, John’s composition of his love song is an abstract form of The Beatle’s song “Blackbird”. John uses the form of the song and creates a new melody intended to portray love. In using aesthetics to express an emotion, he created a song that was very powerful. Even in an incomplete form, when he first played his song for me, I believed he loved the subject of his prose. The achievement of an aesthetic this grand astounded me. Stanley had solid understanding of aesthetic use in music. While at Fusion it became evident that Stanley understood that his art enabled him to express his emotions by revealing, “creation reflects what I feel.” Stanley’s aesthetic is evident in his dynamics on the piano while playing covers and classical songs.

During his time at Fusion Music Program it became evident that Stanley, John and others were learning to listen, judge and give feedback to their peers in a positive manner. Stanley spent much of his free time discussing and listening to music with Luke. Through their conversations, Stanley became familiar with the compositions and
production styles of Hans Zimmer, Howard Shore and Quincy Jones. Stanley and Luke would often listen to these composers learning and judging the merits of each producer’s compositions in an effort to emulate the composers aesthetic art form. This exemplified when, Luke pointed out that “I like how Hans Zimmer uses African tribal drums, and vocals to set the mood in this song” while talking about the song “The Circle of Life” in the animated feature ‘The Lion King’. John and David took a different approach when it came to learning to create their own beautiful music. These youth preferred to learn the technical skills and the music theory that enabled the artists they admired to create music. John studied both classical and funk techniques on the double and electric bass by listening and watching his favourite musicians. The skills John learned while studying classical and funk music, assisted him in creating new sounds that he incorporated into his musical creations. David and John studied musical theory enabling them to advance their composition skills and performance technique. Both David and John saw beauty in virtuosity. While watching professional musicians on YouTube, John would comment in amazement at the skill and technique of the musicians. On multiple occasions, I observed both individuals giving constructive feedback to other youth musicians. Luke and Harry would stress that “music was intended to sound interesting and pleasing”. The youth were very receptive to this teaching often reiterating this during conversations musical styles. While listening to Miles Davis’s Bitches Brew John commented “this song did not sound musical”. Harry indicated that he does not like listen to that type music because there was “too much going on with no [discernable] melody” Learning to listen, judge, and give feedback is as essential to building and creating an aesthetic art form.

The youth’s experiences of flow during musical activities at Fusion
Flow states amongst the participants varied. The following narratives demonstrate how flow states manifest in some of the individuals at Fusion Music Program. The barriers to the creation of flow states within an individual while immersed in musical activities is evident as well, the impact of the flow state on the individual’s mental state.

The Manifestation of flow states in the individuals at Fusion’s Music Program

Flow state manifested in different ways amongst the participants. The most prevalent appearance of flow state was a feeling of intense immersion into the musical activity, accompanied by a deep emotional state. The intense immersion in music was reported to be momentary in nature, but complemented by a focus on the music and the participant’s contribution to the music. These descriptions indicate that a flow state was attained. A greater sense of “awareness of the music” and self was reported by Ron and John. These two youth were of higher musical skill than many other youth at Fusion, allowing them to be more adept at inducing a higher immersion into the musical activity, allowing flow states to occur. This immersion occurs mainly when musicians can find challenges that match their skill level.

Lindsay, Paul and Stanley described the emotional state that occurs while playing as “happy”. John, Lisa and Tom described that during musical performance or composition a sense of relief comes upon their psyche. Lisa said, “I know when I sing everything that I have held inside for whatever all comes out.” This relief was accompanied by release of strong emotions. Tom, Lisa and John were all able to resolve feelings of anger and frustration. The flow of emotion indicates the presence of an optimum mental state in the individuals at the Music Program.
Flow states were also reported to manifest as feelings or release of power. When describing his philosophy of composition John stated, “Let it flow; let it explode out of [me]; let it the power of the music almost insult,” revealing how powerful music can be to certain youth. Lisa felt as though all the emotion she held inside was let out in a “powerful” form, revealing similar feelings as John. Tom’s accounts included feeling “freedom” resulting from a “release of power”, indicate that the flow states may be manifesting in individuals who are performing and listening to music without them knowing or being able to express it in the same way. The intensity of the experience of flow can be explained using the concept of power.

**Barriers to Flow State for the Participants**

Even though Fusion Music Program provides learning environments, which are generally open, non-judgmental, and engaging; barriers to acquiring flow states still exist. Several participants described their anxiety while playing in front of others. Nervous and self-conscious feelings manifested pertaining to how others thought of their musicianship skills. Attaining flow states when nervous can be difficult as the youths’ attention is often distracted in distorted realities the mind creates in an anxious state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008). Distracted thoughts were reported by several of the youth who were interviewed. These thoughts ranged from worries about the judgments of others as with Ron and Lindsay (quoted above), to over analyzing the music as in David’s case,

I am just learning things and so I think that mentally I am making connections to things I have already learned and trying to expand my horizons like we were talking about earlier. Usually when I am playing here at Fusion it is trying things for the first time or trying to nail something and so mostly what I am thinking about is how to do whatever I am doing.
These types of thoughts create a mental state that prevents flow states. In some cases, it was evident that youth were not able to find the appropriate amount of challenge to induce an optimum mental state. Youth at the Music Program reported boredom while learning material that was too easy and instances where the material being learned was too difficult.

The open, non-judgmental, and engaging atmosphere attempt where possible to help youth overcome barriers, whether from others or self-imposed. Nerves often subsided the longer the participant was in the Program as seen during observations and as quoted by some of the interviewees. This decrease of nerves enables the calm mind necessary for a state of flow during musical activity. Proper instruction and encouragement by the Program leaders facilitate youth to become more adept at playing, singing and composing music. The youths’ relative challenge level decreases, permitting a match in challenge to skill level needed to create a flow state in an individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008).

**The Impact of Flow States on the youth in Fusion Music Program**

The impact of flow states seen in the youth was evident in their emotional wellbeing. The vast majority of the youth reported that they felt happy while playing an instrument or singing at Fusion. Youth then described that the emotional release felt while playing an instrument or singing often helped relieve stress. Happiness leading to stress relief create a positive feedback loop. Youth are then inspired to learn more about music and perform musical activities more often. Stanley described this process manifesting as an “inspired feeling”.
For some of the teenagers, participation is simply something to do. Through engagement in the musical forms: playing, singing and listening to music, youth find relief from boredom often seen in daily life in Ingersoll. It is evident that the popular Music Program engages teenagers in such a way that they can ignore their surroundings at other times of the day. In fact, the more skilled musicians often use specific genres as a form of stress and emotional release. For the teenagers participating in Fusion Music Studio, engagement in musical activities also acts as a conduit to release and display strong emotions. The musicians found meaning in the display of emotions shown while participating in musical activities at Fusion. The youth established meaning in their daily life by participating in the activities offered at Fusion Music Program as shown through observations and interviews quoted above.

Summary

This chapter described the experiences of the youth and program leaders involved in Fusion’s Music Program. The challenges of staff members who coordinate the program are a result of the structure of Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre as an afterschool program. The structure of Fusion as a drop-in centre creates inconsistent attendance patterns, frustrating the leaders. Furthermore, personal challenges arise with the leaders including long hours and low pay. The leaders overcome these challenges on a daily basis, creating a culture valuing fun, authenticity, community, inclusivity, support, respect and equity that is sustained by the participants of the Fusion Music Program. The opportunity given to learn music, the use a professional style recording studio and socialization time allow youth to build on assets that they require to thrive. Through participation in the Music Program youth find meaning in their daily lives, explore their
identities and future goals and find meaning in relationships they build, consequently learning about themselves as well as musical practices. Even with the barriers to learning that exist within Fusion’s Music Program, the methods and structures of teaching and mentoring used advances the youth’s musical skills as well as their development.

Evidence of positive youth development at Fusion’s Music Program is illustrated in this chapter by the youth building competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution. The youth also facilitated their advancement of creativity through the exploration of music as a form of creative practice, taking risks, and developing their own forms of expression and aesthetic through music. Finally, the youth’s experiences of flow during musical activities at Fusion were described in terms of the manifestation of flow states in the individuals at Fusion’s Music Program, the barriers to flow states for the participants and the impact of flow states on the youth in Fusion’s Music Program.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

Fusion’s Music Program allowed researchers to study youth development in a rural area while the participants were learning various life skills. Throughout the research time period, various observations of the participants allowed for insight into their development of assets that are included in the Six ‘C’ Model. This unique Music Program offered the youth participants’ opportunities for identity exploration, meaningful activities, and induction of flow states. As a part of an after-school program, challenges for the leaders and for the Music Program emerged. Given the learning structures and pedagogies used by Fusion’s leaders, discoveries were made that can inform current learning theory.

Fusion’s Music Programs role in the youth’s development of the Six ‘C’s within Positive Youth Development Theory

The following section discusses the role Fusion’s Music Program plays in the development of youth’s assets categorised by the six ‘C’s formulated by Lerner et al. (2005) and Benson et al. (2007). In general, the youth who attended the Program developed in the following categories throughout the study period: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Amongst the youth, the observed asset development varied. Discussed below are numerous reasons for the variances amongst the youth in terms of their development across the six ‘C’s.

Competence: A positive view of one’s actions in the domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational (Lerner et al., 2005), developed in all the youth interviewed in at least one domain area. The most commonly seen
developments were social and vocational. Youth developed a positive view of their musical skills and performances through participation in the Program. Music, in being considered a fine art, has generally been researched as its own field. This case study showed that music, like many art forms and sports, can encourage development in youth that stretches at least three of the four suggested domains of competences. Hallam & Creech (2011) provided similar results during their study and even provided data that supported youth developing academic competences in math and literacy. The following section discusses the ramifications of the findings found in this study.

Development of social competencies among the youth is shown through the development of a positive view of their communication skills and connections made amongst peers, teachers, families and teachers. Development of cognitive competencies was observed amongst the youth above age fourteen. It is interesting to note that the influence of positive relationships between youth and leaders tended to accelerate the youth’s cognitive development. Youth’s strong ties with staff members appeared to help them develop positive views about their own cognitive abilities, specifically the ability to reflect and think critically. These findings indicate that social conditions such as the relationship with a teacher can greatly influence a person’s cognitive development, thereby corroborating Vygosky’s (1978) theory regarding the social impact on cognitive development.

For youth who used Fusion as a drop-in centre, a major barrier to development across all four competencies seemed to be internal motivation (Illeris et al., 2007). This finding is puzzling, as the Music Program is engaging and youth driven. Inconsistent motivation was observed and reported due to the perceived commitment it takes to learn
musical skills and a clash of personalities between Program leaders and certain youth. Having two Program leaders at Fusion’s Music Program decreased the number of personality clashes between the leaders and the youth by allowing youth to choose a leader. Participants, who perceived a conflict with a leader, avoided that leader by simply not attending when that person was working. No communication structures are in place to mediate any conflict between the leaders and the youth. The members of Fusion tend to avoid the leaders they dislike, never resolving the conflicts present.

Finding solutions to the perceived time, work ethic and commitment it takes to master a musical instrument is difficult. It was suggested by a previous leader that if youth paid for lessons, commitment might be higher given a financial incentive to participate. It is my contention that the causes of a lack of commitment are multifactorial. Dysfunctional home life, lack of interest in music, structured music lessons with no possibility of informal lessons, and lack of available instrumental or voice practice time and space could result in a lack of motivation to attend the Program (Illeris, 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Bolden et al., 2013). Therefore, finding more time for informal lessons and open group playing may result in higher and more consistent participation from youth.

The results from Fusion’s Music Program indicate that the conception of musical competencies could be improved by interdisciplinary research, which could include social sciences as Karlson (2009) suggests, or psychology, mathematics, engineering, music, and education. Varied forms of thinking may enable researchers to better interpret results that seem confounding and find mechanisms for the development of competency within youth due to participation in music programs.
2) **Confidence:** An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one’s global self-regard, as opposed to domain-specific beliefs (Lerner et al. 2005), grew in the youth as result of participation in the Music Program at Fusion. Higher confidence was largely a result of encouragement and compliments from peers and leaders regarding the youth’s musical performance and composition. In addition, a general sense of belonging to the Music Program enabled the youth to establish a sense that their musical and social actions impacted their immediate community, thereby furthering their sense of self worth thereby boosting the confidence of the youth by providing them with meaningful activities.

The link between pride in specific actions and the youths’ global self-confidence remained illusive. Social atmosphere may play a role as a conduit to self-confidence. As youth expressed that the compliments they received from peers and experts, a positive social atmosphere was therefore present at Fusion. In addition Safe explorations of self through music lead to self-discovery at Fusion’s Music program. A positive social atmosphere in conjunction with a self-discovery most likely plays a large role bridging the gap between youths’ positive views of their actions in specific domains to and their global self-confidence. A positive social scene enables youth to garner encouragement that may translate to a global self-confidence as it enables youth to build the courage needed to explore their identities (Erikson, 1967; Sansom, 2007). In addition, exploration and expression increase an individual’s sense of self, thereby building a youth’s emotional intelligence through a youth’s discovery of both their flaws and strengths. Coming to a positive outlook on strengths and flaws may enable youth to build the confidence necessary for them to act and make decisions independently (Erikson, 1967,
3) **Connection:** Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bi-directional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship were found between the youth that participated in Fusion’s Music Program (Lerner et al., 2005). Youth developed positive bi-directional bonds between friends, teachers/leaders, and Fusion Music Program Community.

Bonds were developed in a compound fashion. Youth developed bonds first with the program leader, who acted first as a music teacher and then as a role model, advisor, mentor and friend. Then youth tended to build stronger bonds with their peers. As youth built strong bonds with other members of Fusion’s Music Program, they began to build a connection with the program itself (building a second home at the studio). The space provided by Fusion’s Music Program served as a meeting place for socialization and a common interest in music provided a starting point for most of the bonds created.

Interesting questions emerged from the form of bond creation within Fusion’s Music Program including:

- Which bonds are priorities for the members of the program? How do such bonds affect the staff members?
- And, which bonds are vital for the sustainability of the Program?

The stability and the strength of the connection are of importance because development in youth is improved if youth create stronger and more stable relationships. For example, the youth who developed strong connections with the leaders tended to show development across all six ‘C’ categories and Creativity. In addition, these youth
sustained and developed deep relationships with their peers and their other communities. The advantages of a strong connection were observed in the relationship between Mitch and Randy. When Randy took the role of a counsellor, advisor or mentor Mitch improved in his development. Mitch built new connections easier and in a stable and storing nature. He also showed development across other categories that were not shown by other participants without a strong connation with a leader. Moving past the normal teacher-student relationship, to a connection based on mutual trust, learning and loyalty therefore can help youth develop across all the ‘C’s. These findings corroborate the research conducted by Hallem et al. (2010).

At Fusion, music serves as a conduit in building relations. Firstly, as stated before, music is a common interest between the youth and enables members to find easy conversation points. Secondly, in a unique way, the music studio also provides youth with a structured form of conversation. The studio provides a structured form of communication through tools such as YouTube and iTunes. Youth use these tools to explore their taste in music in groups by playing, listening and talking about their favourite music. With a chaperone present, youth feel safe to communicate with others while exploring new ways to make friends through music preference. Finally, music is a conduit for communication through self and empathic expression (Heble et al., 2013). Youth learn to communicate and express themselves at Fusion through improvising music in a group, musical style, and composition. This deep form of communication strengthens the bonds between the youth. Practicing these forms of communication enable youth to build stronger relationships in the future (Lerner et al., 2005, Benson et al., 2007).
4) **Character:** Respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviour, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity was found to develop in only a small number the youth in the Fusion music Program (Learner et al., 2005). Of the few instances of the development within the category of character, evidence of development manifested in work ethic in musical practice, respect for rules and the studio equipment, a high moral fibre observed by revulsion of racist comments, self-advocacy about state of the music program, and leadership.

As discussed in Park (2004), character strengths in youth add to youth development. The findings of the case study of Fusion’s Music Program corroborate the works of Park (2004) and Lerner et al. (2005) in the following ways. The high work ethic that was shown by the students reflected a sense of respect for the rules of music and the program, which could lead to a broader morality regarding a respect for the law. The revulsion to racist comments portrayed by the participants points to the youth developing a moral centre, as the revulsion to such abuse is often a result of a person valuing humans of different race as equals and not subjugates or inferior to that of their own. The advocacy shown by the youth is a product of a person supporting their beliefs; an essential quality of a person with integrity. The leadership attributed to the youth at Fusion’s Music program also indicates the development of integrity by the student taking a role, which requires honesty and dedication to finishing a task.

Fewer instances of development within this category of development may be explained by the following reasons. Maturity of the participant may have been an issue. Some of the participants may have needed more life experiences for emergence of well-developed character. Manifestation of moral fibre occurs through dealing with adversity.
Creating adverse situations within Fusion’s Music Program is ethically ambiguous. Many of the members are underprivileged and therefore presumably experience adversity elsewhere. Many youth at the Music Program are in survival mode at home and use Fusion’s Music Program as a place to have fun and dream. Adversity could come in the form of competition; crafted with in the confines of a music contest, however it would be important not to lose the collaborative and supportive nature of the Music Program at Fusion that fosters development in other categories (Kahn, 2014; Cross, 2012). It has been argued by Heble et al. (2013) that the civil rights movement and improvisational jazz are linked through an expression of adversity and hardship. Therefore an increase in expressive improvisation or composition could bring about character development. Further research is needed to discover the role of music on youth development in asset category of character.

5) **Caring:** A sense of sympathy and empathy for others (Lerner et al., 2005), was only found in three to four members of the study. And those who showed development in assets related to caring often only developed in one facet. The expansion of caring beyond empathy and sympathy was necessary to observe development. Attributes related to love, grief (attachment) and remembrance were added to the conception of caring as indicators in order to provide a more complete definition. However the addition of the attributes remains undeveloped and additional research is needed to verify their presence within the caring framework. Lerner et al. (2005) stated that the conception of caring was refined throughout the study. Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth Grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, however
it remained unclear what modifications were made. Therefore a re-examination of its inclusion in the developmental framework may be necessary. The following questions need to asked in or to further the conception of caring in the context of this research: can caring develop? Is caring an emergent trait in an individual?

Empathic communication through musical improvisation is a promising form of practice to further development in the caring category. The case study at Fusion corroborates the opinions and arguments regarding the outcomes of improvisation as a form of empathy (Burns, 2001; Heble et al., 2013). In summary the argument states that communication in improvisational music can be an empathic process when musicians learn to adapt their personal expression to those of the others in the group in order to create music. This is especially the case with Jazz as Jazz is a both a communicative and improvisational form (Heble 2000).

6) Contribution: Accounts for youth’s responsibility to their own communities (Lerner et al., 2005; Benson et al., 2006). Contribution, which is measured by a person’s influence, aid and involvement in their communities (Lerner et al., 2005), was low amongst the youth at Fusion’s Music Program. Other than involvement in the Ingersoll community through performance at local establishments, there were no other forms of contribution that went beyond Fusion’s community. With regards to youth contributing to their local community (Fusion Music Program or Fusion Centre): youth influenced Fusions music program by teaching peers, socializing, advocating for better programming, and aided their community by assisting with operating the Haunted house held by Fusion every year.
The reasons for low contribution probably lie within the context of rural communities and the practice of music. Music is a discipline requiring thousands of hours to master (Gladwell, 2008). Becoming a music student therefore restricts a person time away from their discipline resulting in less contribution to a community. Mandatory school and other extra curricular activities (i.e. organized sports) further restrict time for youth to be involved in their community (Gladwell, 2008; Robinson, 2011). As Ingersoll is located in a rural area, transportation was reported to be an issue verifying Lerner et al. (2005) presumptions regarding youth’s lack of mobility as reasons for youth’s lack of contribution as arranging alternate forms of transport remains difficult for youth. The scope of contribution to a person’s community is different for youth than those of adults. Youth do not have a vote, which restricts their political influence, political motivation and political will (Shucksmith, 2004; Gore, 2006). The culture of schools and after-school programs are different than the workplace. The motivation and structure of the communities are different creating a divide between youth and adult communities (Shucksmith et al., 2004). Youth communities are often based upon their school, after-school programs, friends and family. These communities are still largely dependent on adults for survival; therefore youth have little short-term motivation to contribute as they have little influence over the adult community and in some cases their peers. Given the contextual realities of rural youth the relevance to the measurement of contribution in current state may be inaccurate.

For Fusion’s Music Program, it is a passion for music and art that drives youth to find ways to contribute. Discovering ways for youth to contribute through music may be
key to helping youth develop into contributing citizens. Promoting and managing music festivals, concerts or bands were achieved during Bobbie’s tenure as the leader of Fusion’s Music Program. Learning from his mistakes as an organizer would help promote a positive music scene in Ingersoll. A festival format may be more acceptable to Fusion and Ingersoll as a municipality as it would enable the institutions to separate themselves from festival management through sponsorship. As sponsors they no longer take on the responsibility of the festivals problems that emerge from rock music culture (i.e. a seemingly disrespect for authority, illicit drug use, and rowdy behaviour). However these issues must be acknowledged, monitored and restricted carefully in order to ensure development of the youth is not stunted in other areas. In addition, festivals are less frequent which incurs less risk on the organizers. A festival format could supply youth at Fusion’s Music Program an opportunity for performance (Karlson, 2013).

**Creativity: An Argument for its inclusion Into 5/6 C model**

**Creativity:** the ‘making’ of something that is new and of value was found to progress in some youth as result of their time at Fusion (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). The creative actions of the youth remained within the discipline of music. Through musical innovation, expression and aesthetic invention/sensibility youth at Fusion’s Music Program developed their creativity (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Greene, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). The following section will discuss the role that practicing creativity enhances assets has in the development of youth at fusion’s Music Program. Creativity aids in the development throughout all the “C” categories and advances assets in teenagers not encapsulated in the six “C” models. The following discussions provide evidence for creativity’s inclusion as a “C” in the positive youth
development Five “C” model.

**Enhancing 6 ‘C’ development through practice of creative processes**

The case study of the Fusion’s Music Program provides evidence that creative practices advance youths’ development of competence, confidence, connection, character and caring. The findings of this thesis illustrate that the inclusion of creativity into the six ‘C’ model is important because crafting novel and valuable products aids the development of assets within each of the ‘C’ s.

Creative actions provide catalyst for the development of competence in youth. Musical creativity was observed to develop an intrinsic motivation in the youth. The skills necessary for proficiency in composition and performance in music are vast. Thus, an intrinsic motivation is developed, as the youth must learn skills in order to improve their creativity. The above process develops competence in youth as a result. Intrinsic motivation is a barrier to both creativity and learning (Jeffery, 2006; Illeris, 2007).

Creative actions in music were observed at Fusion’s music program, overcame a lack of intrinsic motivation. In order for the youth at Fusion’s Music Program to craft new sounds, songs, styles required them to engage in divergent and critical thinking. By practicing these cognitive and musical skills the youth participated in unconventional music creation thus improving their competence in vocational and cognitive domains.

Through the exploration of personal expression, the youth at Fusion acquired knowledge of their self and identity aiding to the teenagers’ confidence (Illeris, 2007; Erikson, 1967; Sawyer et al., 2003) Creative action provides a mechanism that moves youth from being proud of an accomplishment in single domain to that of a global sense of self-regard. Expression, experimentation and exploration are all essential processes of
creativity (Robinson, 2011; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Additionally, in order to proficiently express one’s self; an understanding of your personal identity is critical. It was found in the youth and staff members at Fusion’s Music Program that as a person explores their music style and expression a greater knowledge of self emerges thereby building the youths’ confidence. The youth’s confidence ultimately creates a positive feedback loop. Their confidence enables them to engage in new music exploration and composition furthering their self-awareness. A similar process was studied in prisoners participating in the ‘Good Vibrations’ projects (Henley, Caulfield, Wilson, & Wilkinson, 2012; Henley, 2015). The positive impact of creative musical actions of persons manifests as a boost in confidence (Henley et al., 2012; Henley, 2015). As creativity can aid in the development of confidence in youth the creativity’s inclusion in the six ‘C’ is important.

Connection through co-operative creation improved the youth’s ability to connect, as group performance requires communication to create music that is aesthetically pleasing (Heble, 2000; Burns, 2001; Henley et al., 2012; Heble et al., 2013). Youth at Fusions Music program reported an improvement in their social skills was needed to build connections and friends. The youth partly attributed their development of social skills to creative endeavours in co-operative manner. Co-operative creative actions can boost a person’s development of their assets within the category of connection as researched in Henley et al. (2012), discussed in Heble (2000), reiterated in Heble et al. (2013) and examined in this thesis. Given, that the creative actions can aid in the development of connection the inclusion of creativity in the Six ‘C’ is vital.
As creativity is a risky action and is often associated with learning discipline, it builds a person’s character. By taking risks, the youth built courage as their musical creations were rewarded. Creative art forms such as dance, music, and fine art build character, as they require discipline to acquire proficiency (Gladwell, 2008). At Fusion’s Music Program the youth who dedicated time and effort to their craft developed a sense of respect for the rules of music and those of the program. Even though creativity and respect for rules are seen as contradictory, through music the youth developed an understanding of the reason for rules but also where breaking convention can often lead to a valued result. Heble et al. (2013) discusses this contradiction in more detail in his book ‘The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Co-creation’. This discourse describes how the performance of improvisation in a group aids in the development of civil rights advocacy through the emotion, empathy and communication that emerges through the improvisational form. Given the findings of this thesis and the discussions of Ajay Heble and Malcolm Gladwell, creative actions may therefore help youth in the development of their character.

Empathic forms of expression performed during group improvisation provided the youth at Fusion with the unique opportunity to create and practice caring in the same moment. Practicing empathy in this form enabled the youth to develop an essential asset to caring while creating something novel. As Heble (2000; Heble et al. 2013) suggests further exploration of this phenomenon will be needed to elicit the nature of the impact empathetic expression could have on youth in rural areas. Creativity was shown to aid youth in their ability to contribute through involvement in music. Art, sport, dance,
drama, science and business could provide similar avenues for youth involvement in the greater community.

**Creativity Developing Assets out-side those in the Five ‘C’ model**

The assets: originality, aesthetic sensibility and future mindedness are currently not included in the current Five ‘C’ model in positive development theory (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005; Benson et al., 2007). As shown by the youth members at Fusion’s Music Program, creativity encompasses the above-mentioned assets. The youth developed their originality through innovation in the musical field. The crafting of novel sounds and unique songs fuelled curiosity of the program leaders and other members of Fusion’s Music Program, thereby encouraging the youth to develop their originality further. The youth at Fusion grew an aesthetic sensibility through exploration of their musical style and expression. An artistic awareness emerged in the youth as they penetrated the depths of their “souls” through expressing strong emotions such as love. The youth also increased their appreciation of many musical genres as they shaped their own musical style.

Imaginative processes performed by the youth while in the midst of creating new musical rhythms or melodies enabled them to develop future mindedness. By practicing imagination some of the youth began to examine the future as a set of possibilities, this was especially the case when the youth compose and improvise. Imagination may be an essential part of foresight as it allows us to craft creative possible futures (Greene, 2000; Robinson, 2011; Sawyer et al. 2003). Given that the case study at Fusion Music Program found that creativity incorporates, originality, aesthetic sensibility and future mindedness, inclusion of creativity in the Five ‘C’ Model is important.
Music and Arts Based Programs Impact on Rural Youth

A Music program encouraging Identity exploration and Meaningful Livelihoods

The Music program at Fusion provided youth with a space conducive to identity exploration and activities the members found to be meaningful. By building a home at Fusion’s Music Program the youth member lived a meaningful existence while participating in musical and social activities. This case study showed that through participation in musical and social activity youth build a collective identity. Finally through the exploration of their personal musical and social identities youth at Fusion’s Music Program begin to find their place in the world.

Music programs comparable to that of Fusion’s can be advantageous to rural youth as they provide an opportunity for meaningful experiences. The findings outlined in this thesis, substantiated research performed by Susan Hallam (2010) and Karlson (2013). Hallam (2010) and Karlson (2013) found that the youths’ positive mindset while engaged in music making processes enables youth to improve their development in the domains of creativity, social skills, self-discipline, self-confidence, teamwork and emotional sensitivity. As discussed in Hallam (2010) to achieve the above developments students must be in state of enjoyment while working on music making processes. The study found that all the members of the study enjoyed participating in musical activities at Fusion, and thought their time at Fusion Music program was meaningful to them.

Corroborating research of community arts based programs performed by Lowe (2000), the case study Fusion’s music program showed that its members had begun to build a collective identity. The studio had become a second home for many of the youth at Fusion. For the youth, participation in a community livelihood is important. Their participation in Fusion’s Music Program provided the youth with meaningful activities,
friends, and a support network. For many of the youth music became central part of their
daily lives. By spending much of their free time at the studio the youth built connections
that altered their lives in positive manner. The friends and mentors they made often acted
in a supportive role for the youth. Some times the youth would provide support for their
friends and mentors. The support group within Fusion’s Music Program often acted as
family. The youth began to build a collective identity. A sense of belonging to the
Fusion’s Music Program emerged. A collective identity at Fusion’s music program
provides the youth with not only a safe refuge from the challenges they face in daily lives
but a place of belonging; a space for the exploration of their personal identity through
music.

It was found in the case study of Fusion’s Music Program that youth explore their
personal identity exploration through a multitude of processes while participating in
activities at a rural music program. Youth at Fusion’s Music program explored their
musical identities by discovering who they are as musicians, investigating their taste in
music, building upon their personal musical styles in the areas of composition and
performance, and penetrating the depths of their emotions through expression. The
assessments of the youth during performances advanced the youths’ sense of self. The
case study provided further confirmation of the progression of a persons identity
attributed to music making processes previously studied by Sansom (2007). The case
study of Fusion’s Music Program provided evidence that Music and Arts programs can
provide youth with an opportunity to explore one’s self as a member of a Music Program,
as a participant of an after school program, and as a person. Therefore, the youth in the
Music Program, through personal exploration in the field of music began to resolve the identity crisis first described by Erikson (1967).

**Relationships and the Role of Social Atmosphere Music Based Programs**

The relationships youth construct in arts and music programs can have a large impact on youth in terms of their development (Creech & Hallam, 2011; Hallam, 2010). The narratives in the case study of Fusion’s Music Program illustrate that the social environment was also very positive both among the youth and their leaders, corroborating the research of Creech & Hallam (2011) where it was found that a positive relationship between teacher and student to facilitate a students’ development. At Fusion the above pattern was especially the case with the relationship between John and Harry. The mentorship with Harry provided John with the guidance and structure he needed to improve in all areas of development stated above. In contrast, the youth without a relationship of mentorship in place failed to develop. Additionally, the leaders at Fusion’s Music Program are considered to be experts in their field by the youth. The legitimacy of the leaders boosted confidence of the youth participants through the positive comments received from someone they respect (Lowe, 2000). In addition, as mentor the leaders provide guidance to the youth. A positive relationship with a mentor enables youth to progress in learning as the trust between the mentor and student lessens the resistance to accepting the information presented by the mentor as valid (Creech & Hallam, 2011; Illeris, 2008). Lowe (2001) discovered similar findings in his study, and presented his findings in a paper named, “The Art of Community Transformation”. The evidence concerning the importance of building positive connections with the members of arts
based programming is become extensive (Creech & Hallam, 2011; Hallam, 2010; Lowe, 2001; Lowe, 2000; Bolden et al., 2013).

Music Based Programming: An Opportunity for Flow Experiences

Fusion’s Music Program offered youth an opportunity to engage in flow. The mental states of optimum awareness as described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991/2008) as flow states were self reported by the youth while playing, composing and listening to music varied in description. Flow states are characterized by an unusually high focus accompanied by a peaked awareness of a person’s surroundings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991/2008). Flow states have been thoroughly studied in athletes in the 1990’s, however the appearance of flow states in musicians and composers has remained illusive until recently (Bernard 2009, Diaz, 2013; Wrigley & Emmerson, 2013). The following paragraphs discuss the ramifications of the findings of the case study of the Fusion Music program with regards to the corroboration of current studies of flow states emerging in people undergoing flow states during musical activities and possible additional indicators of flow in people activated in music action.

The findings corroborate the studies by Bernard (2009) who described how flow states emerge during composition; Diaz (2013) who monitored flow states while young people listened to music; and Wrigley & Emmerson (2013) who studied students flow states while performing. As in Wrigley & Emmerson (2013) study barriers to flow states were present. Youth reported being nervous during performance indicating that youth are concerned with their performance quality. The concentration on external expectations by the performers may be preventing flow states to emerge. The case study also found that youth had trouble matching their challenge with their skill level so that flow could
materialize. This result was similar to those of Diaz (2013) and Csikszentmihalyi (1991/2008).

Important additions to current literature on flow are the new narratives of feeling while in a state of flow. Feelings of power and freedom accompanied by a flow of emotions and awareness offers researchers new avenues to test the impact of flow states in musicians. Even though the emergence of flow states in youth at Fusion’s Music Program remained variable, music programming could offer youth the opportunity to engage in optimum mental states if the teachers can meet the following conditions: match the skill level of student to challenges of the musical and create a positive social atmosphere.

Challenges for After-School Programs in Rural Areas

The challenges associated with Fusion’s Music Program arise from the structure of after-school programs. Fusion’s Music Program experienced challenges discussed in Lerner’s (2002) review of after-school programs. Low pay, a lack of career advancement opportunities, dysfunctional workplace conditions and long hours were reported by the staff members at Fusion’s Music Program and in Lerner’s (2002) review. As a result, Fusion Youth Centre’s management has had difficulty stabilizing the Music Program Leader position. Attendance for the program is waning as youth have found it difficult to adapt to the new leaders curriculum and style. In addition, youth develop loyalty toward the program leaders and will sometimes leave with the leaders. This structural issue could stunt the youth’s development if instability in the leadership position remains as the youth who established relationships with staff members showed positive development. Solving or managing the structural issues may prove difficult given funding remains a
consistent issue amongst many afterschool programs within North America (Lerner 2002).

The case study of Fusion’s Music Program also illuminated challenges for staff members of after-school programs. As in Khan’s (2014) master’s thesis the program leaders had difficulty managing the drop-in nature of Fusion Youth Centre. In order to manage the inconsistencies attributed to youth using Fusion on a drop-in basis, the staff became reluctant to offer the full array of programming options unless the youth showed a commitment to music lessons or recording time, creating a rift between the youth and the leaders. Further research will be needed to provide the leaders with insight to build structures within the Music Program to accommodate the youth who use Fusion on a drop-in basis. Additionally, the current staff members of Fusion’s Music Program faced challenges with regards to teaching, specifically with evaluation of student’s skill level, interests and individualized curriculum needs. Professional development may assist the leaders in meeting the learning needs of their students better. Solving the challenges of that face after-school programs will aid in the promotion of lifelong learning (Lauzon, 2013; Christie, 2013)

**Fusion’s Music Program informs current literature on learning of youths in rural areas**

This case study of Fusion’s Music Program informs current learning theory in multiple ways. As mentioned in Illeris (2007), creating a program that is flexible to youths learning needs and desires is challenging. Fusion Music Program for the most part sought a balance between highly structured and informal learning experience. This enabled youth to transfer from a teacher-directed learning style to a student-driven curriculum as the instructors at the program accommodated the student’s requests with
both the structured and informal programming. The findings of the case study indicate that adaptive and relevant programming can encourage learning as youth begin to take ownership of their studies in music, thereby overcoming the challenges presented to educators of youth (Robinson, 2011, Lauzon, 2013).

Youth’s relationships with mentors were found to be important throughout the case study of Fusion’s Music Program. From a learning perspective, a positive relationship with the leaders improved the youths’ behaviour and motivation. These findings correspond with the theories produced by Illeris (2003a, 2003b, 2007) and studies by Hallam & Creech (2011). However, in practice, teachers often overlook the relationship between the students and mentors. Teachers may also have difficulty developing a relationship based on loyalty, professionalism, and mutual respect. The result is a lack of respect and trust between the teacher and students. Classroom management issues therefore ensue (Robinson, 2011; Illeris, 2007, 2003b). Fusion’s Music Program shows that relationship building between teacher and student will remain an essential aspect to learning.

The challenges the leaders with the inconsistent youth attendance and commitment indicates that learning is driven by the youths’ upbringing, social environment, and emotions, as experience can greatly effect youth’s motivation to learn (Illeris, 2007, 2003b). Adapting to the individual contexts of the youth was challenging for leaders with the time and programming restrictions of the program. Adding contextual factors of learning into current learning may assist researchers and practitioners in developing solutions so that teachers and instructors can encourage learning instead of restricting it further.
As Robinson (2011) argues creativity in education may be the key to building engaging and relevant programming for youth. It was shown that Fusion’s Music Program offers youth the opportunity to craft new and exciting music through exploration and experimentation. The tools used by the leaders at Fusion offer other practitioners insight into how to employ creativity in other learning environments. For example, encouraging students to compose music and improvise would provide youth with new avenues to study (Bolden et al., 2013). The use of creative musical activities to advance the development of youth, offers researchers avenues for inquiry that could improve the education and livelihood of teenagers in rural areas.

**Conclusion**

The case study of Fusion’s Music Program offered insight into the role that after school music programs play in the lives of the youth of South Western rural Ontario. The case study of Fusion’s Music Program identified that participation in Fusion’s Music Program does indeed foster competence, confidence, connection, character, caring and creativity in the youth. The state of the relationship with the leaders and the maturity of the youth had an impact on the degree of the development each youth showed. The study found that Fusion’s music program built both the youth’s personal sense of identity and meaning in their lives through creative and social processes associated with music. The youth at Fusion’s Music Program began to identify themselves as competent musicians and found meaning in the musical activities they performed in a place they began to consider a second home, the Music Program. Through observation and self-report the youths ‘flow’ experiences were explored. The case study corroborated the barriers to
attaining a state flow as well as identified new manifestations of optimum awareness as feeling of power and freedom.

The current pedagogical approaches, used by the current and past co-ordinators of the Fusion youth music program and the participants where shown to be aiding the development of the youth and staff members. However, the challenges of the staff are substantial. Finding ways to manage these challenges will be essential to the sustainability of the music program at Fusion as the development and attendance of the youth is dependent on the leaders ability to build trust between the youth and themselves. The tools and learning structures the instructors used enabled youth to develop into competent musicians and with the social acumen that may enable them thrive in the future. The importance of the leaders building a relationship with youth highlights a key finding of the case study; that building trust with the youth is essential to youth becoming proficient learners aiding the youth in managing the other contextual factors with regards to their learning. The interaction between the social, physical, educational and psychological parts of the rural community of Ingersoll created a unique music program that offers meaning and development to youth.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

**The Six C’s Framework**

Further research is needed to explore and examine the resultant development of youth’s assets within all the categories. Within the developmental category of competence this research did not test academic performance of the youth. The restricted scope of the research methods prevented an accurate way measuring the youths’ attitude towards their performance at school as self-report was deemed an inappropriate form of
measurement. However, through observations and self-report, multiple youth showed improvement in music theory, music history, and instrumental technique. It has been shown by other studies such as Hallam (2010) that positive academic performance in music could help with arithmetic, history, and English. Therefore, it is assumed that the higher developed youth in the program developed academic competence. Nevertheless, further research on the correlation between Fusion’s programming and academic performance is needed to find out if participation in the Music Program is linked with academic competence.

The scope of the research prevented more inquiry into the gap between pride in person’s actions in a single domain and an individual’s global self-confidence. In particular, the mechanism that leads a person to develop confidence after a positive experience in the creation and performance of music remained illusive. Self-reflection and increased self-awareness seemed to provide a catalyst for this process; however, this pattern remained confused. Therefore, further research is needed to bring to light the mechanisms that bridge the gap between the development of confidence within a single domain, such as musical performance and advancing of global confidence within youth.

Further research is needed to explore the relationship of the advancement of social skills acquired during musical performance and the youth’s development within the category of connection. Even though a common interest in music and a positive social atmosphere was attributed to their development by both the youth and the leaders, the observed social skills practiced by the youth during ‘Jamming’ may have aided the youth in making of friends during their time at Fusion’s music program. The exploration of the social atmosphere during co-operative musical performance could advance our
understanding of the mechanisms that assist in the development of connection within youth.

The lack of development of character within the youth at Fusion’s Music Program is puzzling. A program culture that values respect and discipline should aid in the youth’s development of their character. Given that youth who exhibited assets within character were those who had previously developed assets within the categories of competence, confidence and connection, it may be that development of the above three “C’s” is needed for youth to develop their character. The lack of development may also indicate that the development of character may not occur frequently within youth’s between the ages of 12-18. Further research is needed to discern the reasons for the low levels of development.

An incomplete conception of the caring reflected the research within this thesis. Expanding caring conception beyond acts and feelings of empathy may provide researchers with new avenues of research. As discussed in this thesis concepts related to caring such as remembrance, love and grief can provide indicators for the development of caring. However, these indicators of caring remain untested. Further research is necessary to validate the indicators.

Development within the category of contribution was low as well. Barriers such as transportation and lack of training were given as reasons for the lack of contribution. As discussed above the contextual realities of rural youth and their perception of their communities may largely determine youth’s ability to contribute. Re-examining the definition of youth contribution to stress contributions within school, family and extracurricular programs such as after-school programs may provide researchers with a
more accurate measure. More research is needed to in order to adjust the of youth’s contribution measure to the scope of their reality.

**Meaning and Identity**

Although, the concepts of meaning and identity were explored in depth within this case study the mechanism’s that lead youth to attribute meaning to their daily activities remained illusive. Further research is therefore needed to examine mechanisms that result in youth in rural areas finding meaning through activities at a music program. Youths’ mental states of enjoyment could enable them to create meaningful experiences, which in turn, builds the requirements necessary that facilitate a youth’s learning (Creech & Hallam, 2011). Therefore, examining activities that youth enjoy may provide direction to this inquiry.

**Music and after school programs**

This thesis pointed to many research opportunities that lie within the context of music and after-school programs. The findings provide evidence that developmental impacts do occur among youth who participate. Even though the long-term impact of music programs similar to Fusion’s remained illusive the findings indicate that youth can begin to thrive when consistent participation in an array of programming offered is achieved by the youth.

Music programs within after-school programs pose specific challenges to the program coordinators and leaders. Managing these challenges will be of importance to ensure sustainability of the music programs similar to Fusion’s. Therefore, research is needed to find strategies for both administrators and youth work practitioners to implement that will abate the impact of the challenges the practitioners face on a daily
Music programs similar to Fusion’s provide youth with an opportunity to have flow states as the unique learning structure provides youth with ability to match the challenges presented to them with their skill level. The flow of emotion the youth felt while playing is meaningful. The described power and freedom felt during musical performance provides researchers with new indicators of flow if verified by more rigorous research. In addition the release these feelings provides researchers, within the field of musical therapy, with mechanisms to study that provide could patients with relief of suffering.

The findings showed that music programs provide youth with ability to engage in creative actions. The impact of creative processes on cognitive and social development of youth was apparent. Further research is needed to verify the observations of the researcher and the reports of the youth on the effect music on youths’ cognitive and social advancement, specifically the development of critical thinking, reflective thought and the ability to connect with other youth. The performance improvisational music showed particular promise in this area but due to time restraints was only explored briefly. The opportunity to perform improvisational music is a rarity among rural youth. Rural music program’s like Fusion’s provide researchers with opportunity to delve into impacts of improvisational music on youth. Research questions to be considered in the future could include:

- Can improvisational music further development while bypassing cognitive development of speech?
• What the impact of empathic communication through music for people with autism and non-verbal learning disabilities?
• Is it possible to start to observe the impact of music programs on children in early life stages (i.e. ages 5 - 12)?
• Can improvisation bypass instrumental skill development with a focus on rhythm and homemade instrumentals?

**Recommendations for Fusion’s Music Program**

Given the findings described and discussed the following four recommendations are intended to improve the Fusion’s music program.

1) Professional development options should be made available to the leaders of the program. The options should stress instruction and teaching methods, specifically in evaluation of youth’s technical ability and strategies that engagement of youth with low motivation. This recommendation is made for two major reasons: To improve the quality of instruction given to the youth and to mitigate the leaders challenges with regards to teaching.

2) The schedule of the programming activities should be modified to include more Open Jam and group playing options. This can take the multiple forms. Musical group recording sessions that stress improvisation and composition could aid this transition. Given that the capacity for tracks to be recorded in-group play is needed it is suggested that full days be booked for the activity to aid in the logistics. Leader directed improvisation is also recommended, as this will aid the youth in learning to play in a
group setting. This recommendation is made as the youth asked for more Open Jam during focus group.

3) The youth need the time and space for musical practice. If possible the optimal solution is the addition of 2 Insulated 6’-8’ practice rooms. The recommendation will ease program-planning difficulties for the leaders. The leaders suggested this solution during the beginning phases of observational period.

4) The high turn over rate of the leaders at the program has created instability within the music program in terms of the number and duration of participation by the youth. An overseer in the role of a program director may stabilize the fluctuation in a number of ways. The high leader turnover rate has resulted in lack of consistency in programming options and structure, which is confusing for the youth. A program director could create a consistent schedule that is not dependent on the leader preferences thereby solving this issue. The director also provides a consistent person that can build relationships with the youth. Hiring someone established in the music industry that interested in teaching and youth may secure a longer working period as well. Hiring mature youth by recommendation of Fusion Music staff member to instruct the younger members may aid the program as well.
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