Chapter 7
"Opportunity to Flourish": Reconnecting Pedagogy for Youths Out-of-School and Out-of-Work

Children and young people engage in learning events, activities, and enterprises at various strengths of involvement and for varying periods of time. This stretches our thinking about engagement to a range of contexts well beyond standard classroom applications which has been a clear focus of previous chapters. What we know from those classroom applications is that both accessible opportunities to engage, and acting on those opportunities, are key elements to facilitating engagement.

In our coverage of educational contexts, we have considered engagement in two ways—first, in overarching terms as one's behavioral, cognitive, and affective connection with the diversity of opportunities accessible in schooling and second, with more specific focus through one's vigor, absorption, and dedication to study, work, and play. Both views predict academic success for those who engage well. Additionally, they predict fruitful post-school transitions into employment, career, health, and well-being (Pinquart, Juang, & Silbereisen, 2003). They also negatively associate with indicators of students' aberrant social behaviors (Malecki & Elliott, 2002) and ill-being, such as depressive symptoms and burnout (Tuominen-Soini, Salmela-Aro, & Niemivirta, 2012; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013).

This wide line of positive and negative interconnection reminds us that in the broadest sense, engagement is about social inclusion. Engaging well is good because the benefits described above flow over into agency, aspiration, goal-setting, decision-making, social esteem, well-being, and enhanced inclusion. People who were highly engaged as students, and were successful, are likely also to have been socially included during their student years. Also, as adults they are likely to sustain their potential for engagement and to be positively connected as active and valued members of families, friendship groups, clubs, religions, political parties, nations, and the like, and, generally affirmative about society and themselves.

Unsurprisingly, the reverse side of this picture is immediate and longer-term vulnerability associated with disengagement. A student's wavering study-related engagement, or lack of it, reduces academic success and may hamper the development of achievement-linked identity, efficacy, and esteem. Similar problematic engagement at

the macro level puts at risk the participation and constructive connections students might otherwise have with the institutions of school and schooling and the accessibility these typically provide for personal and social growth and development. Both forms limit social networking and big-picture views of what the socially accepted norms of a school are and how they apply, and restrict accessibility to spaces, time, and success– opportunity dimensions of schooling to those prescribed by a student's compulsion to be there. The vulnerability stretches to social exclusion. Students with poor engagement records are susceptible to psychosocial distress (Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013), poor within-school and post-school transitions (Pinquart et al., 2003), and widely ranging exclusion as members of community, particularly where long-term unemployment is involved (Kieselbach, 2013). Vulnerability itself is stretched by social exclusion and by marginalization that impedes access to opportunities to engage with, and benefit from, connectedness with those otherwise well-positioned to promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of healthy and learnerly development.

Let's look at what can go wrong when connection in a broader sense has not worked so well during a young person's years of schooling—and what can be retrieved when "engagement" is at the heart of a second-chance reconnection.

> **Case Vignette: An Enterprising Recovery**
> *(Based on data derived from an Australian Research Council-funded project)*
>   *Setting:* Opportunity time in a social enterprise program
>   *Situation:* Michelle was a youth worker with qualification and experience in social work and Patrick's case counselor at OurTown, a nongovernment youth training center in Sydney, Australia, that provided crisis care and wrap-around services to young people in need. Michelle was on site to finalize a 3-month review of Patrick's progress as part of an OurTown social enterprise to reforest parkland on the outskirts of western Sydney. At her invitation, Patrick reflected on who he had been when he first arrived at OurTown.
>   *Persons* Focal student, Patrick; youth worker, Michelle
>   *Involved:* Patrick's group mates, Mick and Dori; youth trainer, Bondy; reading support teacher from technical and further education (TAFE), Mrs. Neubecker
>   *Patrick*: "Well, I wasn't much good, then. I've changed a lot. I'd been in and out of 'Juvie' (Juvenile Detention) since I was 12, more out of school than in it—I never wan'ed to be there, just wan'ed to leave. It was crap and I didn't stick it—and never really needed to hav'a real job when I left. My father and grandfather were on 'the dole' (a benefit paid by the Australian Federal Government to the unemployed), gettin' close to $500 per fortnight each. They'd been gettin' it for years. They even knew what 'the dole' meant—they'd said they'd looked it up on Google, but wouldn't ever tell me. I knew they wouldn't. But I know now. Anyway, I was happy that they took me when I turned 16 to get it, too. (Patrick had signed for the benefit using forged documents attesting to his eligibility for the Youth Allowance of $414 per fortnight, a matter now under investigation by

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the New South Wales (NSW) Police Service.) The 'Junior Dole,' they called it. So, I was 'on the dole,' too, then. Then, I got here."

Michelle: "What was it like—being on the dole?"

Patrick: "Good. It wasn't just getting money, though. Being on the dole meant fillin' out a form and doin' an interview at the Employment Office every month. They'd ask what was happenin' at work and at TAFE (Technical and Further Education—Australian institutions equivalent to the Community College system in the US) and how the apprentice thing was workin' and that. Doin' that had been my $400 a fortnight—a job, sorta'—that minus the hundred that my father and grandfather took for showin' me how to get it—and what to do to stay on it. I didn't mind. They'd faked the apprenticeship papers I had to have to get the allowance and I made just as much as the dole by shopliftin' and robbin' people—grabbin' old ladies' handbags, mostly. So, I was makin' more money than them anyway. I shouldn'a been doing that (shoplifting and robbery) I know, and I'd been caught three times when I was young. Then I got known and people were watchin' me wherever I went. They'd even found my cache (his drugs and what he'd kept from his shoplifting and robberies and had hidden in old trees at the back of his grandfather's house where he and his parents also lived). I was broke and knew they'd find out soon enough that I wasn't an apprentice, and that'd be the enda' the dole."

Michelle: "So you were desperate?"

Patrick: "Yeah. That's how I got here. It was gettin' harder to make a score and I'd be in adult prison next time they nabbed me. I couldn't read or write much, so there wasn't much point tryin' for a job. No one woulda' given me a job. People like me don't get past the door. So, yeah, I was desperate. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know nothin'. Mum had told me to go see the Salvos (Australian informal name for Salvation Army) and they brought me here—to OurTown, and Mum said ya were a mob like the Salvos—not government, just do-gooders."

"That was me. That was Day 1."

Michelle: "And what has happened since then?"

Patrick: "Well, I've finished the meth schedule and so far, so good. So, last month I started in the Greentrees program. Oh, and I'm waitin' to find out if I've gotta go to court for rookin' the government. The meth brought me down and I'm off the drugs now, I think, so that's good. And the lawyer you guys got for me said we are gonna' offer to the police to pay back the money I got for the dole and that ya can take it out of my Greentrees pay each week until it's done. So, we've got a plan."

Michelle: "That's good. Tell me about the best thing that's happened to you since you've been here."

Patrick: "It's all good. Maybe the best thing is I wanna' come here every day. Bondy (Youth Trainer) is terrific. He's like, like what every teacher shud be. We all like learnin' with him. Ya can come see if ya want."

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Michelle: "OK, I'd like to do that—but could you put into words what he does that is so good. Tell me."

Patrick: "Yeah, it's easy. Like he says, 'learnins' like a treasure hunt. Ya gotta have a map to find a treasure and the map's always in here (gesturing to his head). Ya got electricity in there that can turn anything on, so long as ya turn on the switch to make it work'. And he told us that the turned-on switch is what keeps yer concentratin' and it keeps yer goin' until ya get the thing done, no matter if it's as excitin' as when ya footy team wins or as borin' as watchin' the weather report."

> Every day he starts by remindin' us to 'turn on the switch' and we all get to say it out loud all through the day. Even when ya start to drift off, if he doesn't notice, then Mick or Dori (fellow youth participants in the enterprise) or one of them others will remind ya to 'turn yer switch back on'.
>
> And, he says when ya want to know something that ya don't know yet, or do something that ya can't do yet, be happy. Don't be embarrassed, cause everyone's a learner. Only smart people know it's OK to say ya don't know something.
>
> So, when I heard that I started bein' smart and askin' him questions about how to learn when ya not really any good at it, and, how to read words that ya don't know. And, he always says, 'Hm, that's interesting.' And then he tells me a little trick to try and shows me how he uses it. Or, he says he doesn't know, but he'll find out. And he does find out. Like when he went to ya, to get me into the reading support group on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Michelle: "Yes, I remember and according to the records, you have been to every session and your test last week was a really good result."

Patrick: "Yeah, I know—ya' gotta' be there to learn, and, I'm onto *The Missing Coins* now. It's a book that only two of us in the group are up to. I still don't know every word, but I read on and that helps me guess. I started asking Mrs. Neubecker (the Reading Support Teacher from TAFE employed part-time by OurTown). She showed me how to write them on the computer and use 'Tools' to find out what they mean. Then she showed me to go to 'Google' and then 'Dictionary' as a second way. Oh, and I used that trick to look up, 'What is the dole?' Oh, and Bondy told me that instead of the trees where I us'ta put my treasures, I could use me head to put me new learnin' treasures. Me mates in the group are Dori and Mick. They like Bondy, too, because he really tries to understand what we us'ta be, and he doesn't like, tell us we're rubbish. He tries to find something we've done and uses that to show us how to be someone different, sorta. Dori says he's a magician!"

Michelle: "That is so good, Patrick and you are doing so well. Keep it going, mate. Let's go and see what's happening out in the shed in the Greentrees enterprise today so that I can see how Bondy works. Do you think I can just merge in without disturbing the things you all do?"

Patrick: "Yeah, but ya probably really don't need to after what I just told ya? Bondy just makes us see that we can make things happen. And we can. But, don't believe me, come on, let's go."
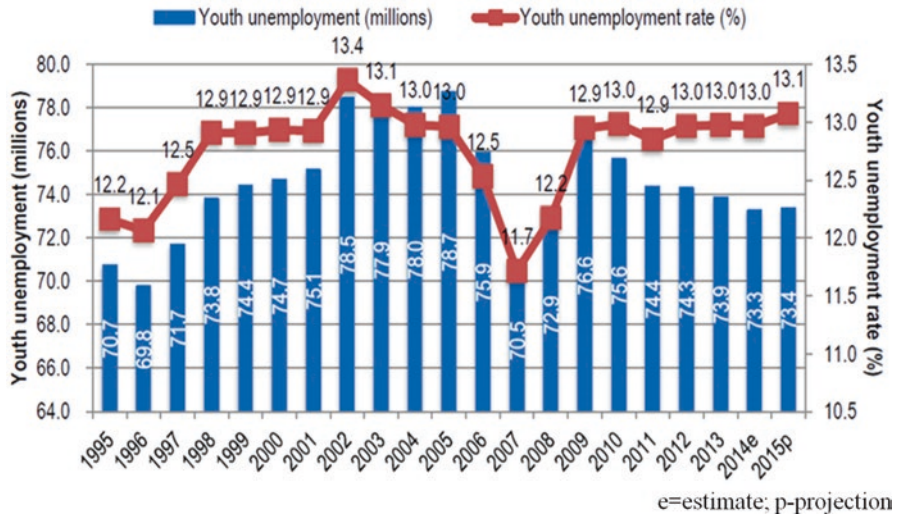
Fig. 7.1 Global youth unemployment 1999–2015 (Source: ILO, http://www.ilo.org/rome/risorse-informative/comunicati-stampa/WCMS_412014/lang--en/index.htm)

Reconnecting Socially Through Engagement

Reconnecting with socially disengaged youth who are out-of-school and out-of-work is a current imperative for many Western nations. Its urgency is associated with climbing unemployment rates among the young, worldwide (Fig. 7.1), and a related and hardening social disconnect that exacerbates young people's vulnerability at a key life stage when they are exploring their emerging identities and pathways of promise to ostensibly better futures (Brydsten, Hammarström, & San Sebastian, 2016; Eichhorst, Hinte, & Rinne, 2013). In its most recent report, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2015) concluded, "despite a mild recovery in the 2012–2014 period, the youth unemployment rate remains well above its pre-crisis level. For millions of young people around the world finding a decent job is still a drawn-out uphill struggle" (para. 1). The ILO assessment was conducted prior to the 2015 acceleration of the Middle East migration to a European crisis point. Consequently, its projection is likely to understate the current worsening position, with over one million displaced persons in 2015 alone (BBC, 2016) searching for work in Europe.

The impost of war and associated displacement brings with it a related and hardening potential for social disconnect to many of those young people not yet included in the ILO data. Youth among the incoming migrant groups are caught up in social upheaval that includes interracial tensions among migrating groups and increasing uneasiness with some peoples of some host nations. The uncertainties of sustainable and accepted status as members of foreign communities and the loss of their historic places and faces limit both current and past access and participation in work,

schooling, friendship, and other familiar social groups. Such a culture of change and turmoil provides a backdrop for political radicalization where young migrant people who are desperate to find inclusion (Cochrane, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 2015) often do just that with just the wrong groups.

Even without such horrendous conditions, being unemployed and out-of-school in relatively stable politico-social contexts has weakened many young people's capacity and resolve for agentive and positive community contribution and exacerbated their vulnerability to social exclusion (Bartlett, 2016a, b; Schaar, 2015). For youth (15–24 years of age), this is happening at a key life-transition stage. For their wider communities, it has become an ongoing concern as communities rely on the participation of their young people to build the experience and acumen to sustain and improve existing standards of living.

Dynamic communities want youth to be participating and productive members of their active societies and seek out effective and lasting solutions that will address any connection problems impeding these objectives (Bartlett, Mafi, & Dalgleish, 2012). Youth who turn off their engagement button are susceptible to falling out of contact with home, family, and friends; to becoming overly reliant on social services; to stop looking for employment, further study, and training; and to come increasingly into contact with risky acquaintances, often invoking the intervention of police and the juvenile justice system.

Kieselbach's (2013, p. 19–20) notion of seven types of exclusion in adulthood allows us to depict in this susceptibility what can go wrong when connection in a broader sense has not worked so well. Specifically, chronically unemployed young people are open to marginalization because of a list of deleterious conditions and factors that may result in exclusion in different dimensions:

- Inadequate knowledge and basic qualifications restrict participation in continuing/higher education and training.
- A lack of academic success and wavering engagement hampers the development of academic identities and self-worth.
- A lack of intellectual know-how renders it difficult to seek and benefit from appropriate learning opportunities.
- Schools and teachers fail to provide appropriate support to meet their needs and address their concerns.
- Limited support on learning and academic development from parents, relatives, peers, and neighbors.
- Low levels of school readiness, underdeveloped personal skills, and holding cultural norms that are incompatible with school and classroom practices pose challenge to school and learning adjustments.
- A lack of community support and learning resources due to living high-poverty locations.

Being unemployed means people do not have jobs, tasks, workplaces, and colleagues on which to focus their own vitality, participation, and dedication. Exclusion such as Kieselbach (2013) highlighted dramatically lessens unemployed young people's access to employment opportunity. Further, it diminishes the potential they

have for engagement in its broader sense. They are not in the space to engage. Because of their exclusion, they have lesser behavioral, cognitive, and affective connection with the assortment of institutional, social, and cultural opportunities that may once have seemed accessible to support the location of, and participation in, work and further study. These disengaged young people so affected act in increasingly sparing ways to get jobs. Being trapped in the debilitatingly personal dynamics perpetuated by exclusion and disengagement, most young people begin to think in constrained ways about what might be possible and begin to devalue participation in work. As the ILO data tell us, this predicament is a malaise affecting youth at an alarming rate.

Negative effects of unemployment reach far beyond the personal consequences experienced by disengaged youth themselves, albeit that these are typically debilitating and often dire—including breakdown in agency and relationships (Dwyer, 2004; Henman, 2002), impediments to well-being, and repeated arrests and incarceration associated with high rates of offending. The heavy social and economic costs of supporting these youth reach to, and are borne by, community through loss of capacity in the community's workforce and expenses to be paid when such youth have no food or housing and no means of paying for health care and are at the far end of socially responsible behavior where their actions often associate with policing attention, court appearances, and jail. These costs are considerable. For example, recent Australian data from the Productivity Commission (January 2016) show costs to keep someone in an Australian prison averages $AUD 292 per day, with a cost to the nation in 2014–2015 of $AUD 3.7 billion, excluding capital expenses.

Such losses and costs spread across society, resulting in loss for all. Chronically unemployed youth suffer incapacity in relation to continuation of healthy and productive growth trajectories, and the community suffers from the social consequences of experiencing the disengagement of some of its youth and watching them slip well below their potential to contribute to the common good and in the costs of deploying resources to sustain these young citizens in the hope of their eventual retrieval, reconnection, and active participation.

Thus, young people's "turning off" with these types of consequences has festering disaffection with what society might otherwise see as traditional support structures (e.g., families, religions, clubs) (Bartlett et al., 2012). A complex cycle of deepening disengagement, chronic unemployment or underemployment, and continuing disconnection and vulnerability is prevalent among disadvantaged young people, notably those who are undereducated, Indigenous, in poverty, and/or with histories of dysfunctional family situations. Anlezark's (2011) classification (Table 7.1) from various analyses of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth and related research of factors of young people being "at risk" of poor schooling outcomes is pertinent. Each of the characteristics is a negative prediction of young people's productive engagement in, and beyond, schooling. However, Anlezark has distinguished those features that are exogenous and unchanging from those where prediction conceivably might be mediated with positive intervention in the interests of reestablishing connections, inclusion, and prospects for better futures.

Table 7.1 Characteristics of young people "at risk" of poor outcomes

Exogenous factors	Mediating factors
• Indigenous	• Poor attitudes to school
• Born in Australia	• Attend government school[a]
• Live outside metropolitan areas	• Poor student–teacher relationship
• Low academic achievers	• Dislike of school
• Low levels of literacy and numeracy • Low socioeconomic status • Parents work in blue-collar occupations • Parents without university education • Nonnuclear family	• Intention in Year 9 to leave school early • Poor student behavior • Lack of engagement with schools' extracurricular activities

[a]May also be an exogenous factor if limited school choices are available

One approach, aimed at breaking the cycle of disaffected youths' dysfunction and redressing any presumption of inevitable lifelong disengagement, gaining worldwide support is to involve them in social enterprise programs. These paid work programs are socially authentic and relevant—properties that present opportunities for youth to learn and form durable insights about what engagement means, what engaging in something needed by the community and themselves can do, and how genuine engagement enables them to build their skills and awareness into personally grounded, better futures. We argue that these insights form the basis for an engaging pedagogical orientation that many social enterprise programs adopt, advance, and promote. While such pedagogical orientation aligns with research on facilitators of engagement reviewed in Chap. 2, its point of departure is that it is future-oriented, focusses on desirable outcomes at both personal and community levels, and aims to target reconnection. The combination of these features enables these disaffected young people to network with communities within and beyond the social enterprise in order to promote their sense of inclusion, purposefulness, and relevance as their reconnection unfolds (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Social Enterprises

Social enterprise programs are usually operated by nongovernmental agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and community groups. Typically, this sector targets disadvantaged groups as its clients and is open to youths who are still looking for work and those who are referred from the juvenile justice system. The sector generally competes on the open market for community-benefit projects open to public tender. The organizations keep marginalized participants in the mainstream community where real, publicly visible work provides a context for workers, support staff, and the community to support re-engagement of once-disengaged youths and to make

positive differences in their current and aspirational lives. The work output is accountable at standards contractually established in the awarding of tenders. Projects also are publicly visible because of the community-need basis of the work. The inclusive culture synonymous with this form of adaptive learning is akin to that intended in mainstream-based schooling with differential support under inclusive education policy (McMaster, 2015; Mitchell, 2015).

Yourtown (Formerly BoysTown)

Renamed in 2016 to better represent its young female and male clients, Yourtown is one Australian organization that has offered a number of social enterprise programs to youth over the past decade. Its mission statement was and remains, "To enable young people, especially those who are marginalized and without voice, to improve their quality of life" (BoysTown, 2011).

The great majority of participants in the study (Bartlett et al., 2012)[1] reported here, and the majority of Yourtown's clients (BoysTown, 2011), have histories of unemployment, personal disregard, and social disaffection reflective of Kieselbach's (2013) typology of exclusion reported earlier. Yourtown's social enterprises have varied from local government contracts to remove graffiti, projects to rejuvenate home site gardens in low SES communities, developments in cultivating green tree spaces, and state government contracts for highway beautification to private sector construction. They share the following components:

- Paid work experience for participants in real-life yet supported environments
- Experiential learning on-the-job to improve vocational skills and, where possible, to provide credentialing
- Case management and group workshops to address personal development barriers

Staff at Yourtown see the induction component of youth's inclusion as an engagement opportunity. It is an opportune time and space to create an openness to their engagement with the organization generally, and with the social enterprise in particular. Their purpose in this intention is that youth will see both institution and social enterprise as a viable "third space" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999; Moje et al., 2004), an engagement opportunity from which to start again. In essence, youth are able and more likely to create a new reality in this third space where they see its opportunities as different from their home and out-of-home experiences (including failed or negative workplace experiences) (first space) and in what had been their likely future (second space).

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[1] The study Reconnecting Disaffected Youth through Successful Transition to Work (Bartlett, Project LP0776519) was supported by the Australian Research Council under its Linkage Project study support program.

The induction includes encouragement to try Yourtown as an alternative to what had not worked well before. It is a trust-building time and space. As one of Yourtown's executive staff advised in an interview during the Bartlett et al. (2012) study, "We have to understand the reality of the situation and the construct of it. We need to understand their construct for understanding reality. We need to link this to the third space" (BTBA). Case study data indicated that youth seemed to see it this way, too:

[It was] Good [the decision to come to Yourtown] because it doesn't mean I'm on the streets (BTY109);

Just to keep out of trouble [What I like about this], I get myself in enough trouble (BTY109).

Following youths' induction and their engagement in the opportunity space, youth trainers lead the next section of opening access to specific engagement with activities that have authentic skill and knowledge-building properties. Youth trainers generally have trade skill personal history, and some have come from disadvantaged backgrounds similar to many of the young people in the group. All use hands-on approaches to introduce work skills of the area (e.g., horticulture; graffiti removal; green trees) and to guide youth in acquiring and refining these skills and building a work ethic. Learning engagement in this context is motivated by a mastery focus on knowledge and skills that disengaged young people consider useful for them and their community. Collaboration, assistance, and empathy create a safe and caring pedagogical environment where social engagement is supported, constantly shared, and encouraged.

Learning in a social enterprise activity setting is social with scaffolding to guide its operation and reinforcement provided by the youth trainers for successes however small. The youth trainers model, demonstrate, break jobs into doable tasks, and convince or cajole participants to get involved. One youth who was initially a reluctant participant in the Yourtown program noted,

... He's taught us heaps of stuff to do. I've never used a concrete saw before and he's—at first, I was, no, I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to. He was, like, come on, just give it a go, watch me cut it. I watched him and then he gave me a go. So, he gave me confidence and that. Yeah, he's tops. (Bartlett et al., 2012, BTY 130)

There was obvious perception and appreciation in the young participant's reflection for the youth trainer's mix of modeling and encouragement.

The conceptual model developed from accounts that Yourtown's staff gave of their work positions Yourtown's entire staff as people who were mindful of the diversity of their clientele and ready to listen and provide support, and, as advocates for their young clients. The focal points of support are shown in Fig. 7.2. Advocacy through them provides a principled pedagogical environment guiding how staff interact with once-disengaged adolescents. As expected, there was a strong push by staff to recognize and meet students' needs and progress those actions into building connections and collaboration across the collective.

Bartlett et al.'s (2012) study tracked 542 young people starting, about to start or currently participating in, a social enterprise or related work transition program
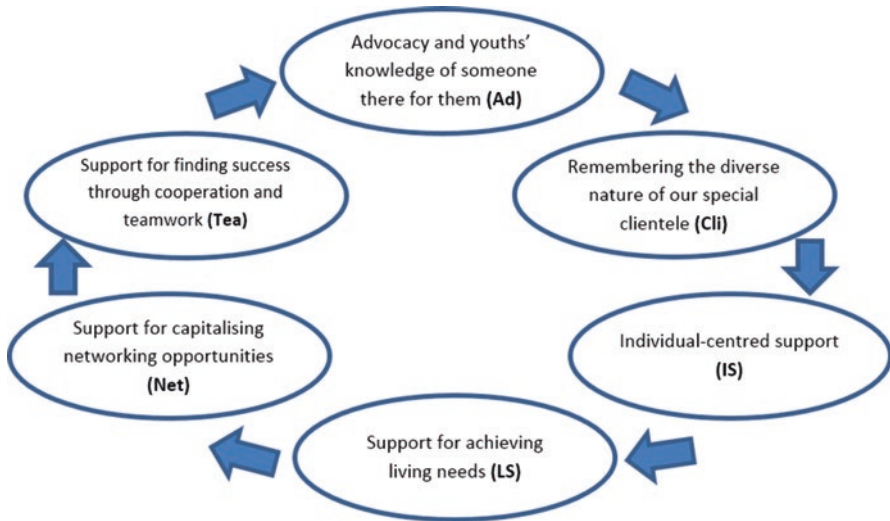
Fig. 7.2 Working to recognize and attend to youths' psychosocial and cultural needs

conducted by Yourtown. Participants were 135 females and 406 males whose average age was 18.8 years (SD = 5.2 years). The participants had diverse backgrounds that were most typically configured around historical marginalization and disadvantage through which identifiable barriers to employment had developed. Notably, 34% relied on government welfare payments, and 24.9% indicated they had no income before starting with Yourtown. There had been negative modeling through the family employment histories—45% of the young people had grown up with their adult models not having regular work and being reliant on welfare payments. Few of the youth themselves had employed-work histories, with 44.7% never actively participating in the workforce and a further 38% having done so only through very occasional casual work. Levels of formal education were low with 38.6% having dropped out before completing their compulsory years of schooling, and many lacked secure accommodation with 11.7% living in supported accommodation facilities, 6.3% in temporary and unstable situations, and 42% in public housing. General characteristics across participants were:

- Depressed language, literacy, and numeracy skills
- Offending and antisocial behavior
- Substance abuse
- Lack of social support
- Low self-esteem
- Poor emotional well-being
- Little optimism about the future or goal-setting

- Constrained aspirations
- Maladaptive decision-making styles

There were two critical findings from the research in relation to engagement. First, the majority of the young people who commenced a program stayed with it through to its completion. This high level of persistence signified sustained behavioral engagement, which was associated with major measureable employment and psychosocial outcomes such as gaining and staying in a job as well as having better socialization, agency, self-esteem, and feelings about their futures. This observed result indicates the successful transition to work most participants made following previous failure to do so. The connection with engagement in this finding is that the young people's persistence once at Yourtown is indicative of a commitment to attend which then opened into opportunity for so many of the young people to access and participate in the program's intended agenda for positive change.

The Employment Outcome

More than 77.4% of the starting sample of 542 young people remained engaged with Yourtown through to completion of their social enterprise program, both in terms of attending, and in the development of work and attitudinal shift as indicated in data reported below. Doing so speaks to high percentage recovery of engagement among a population characteristically at risk of failure (Anlezark, 2011) and for whom schooling had not mediated that risk in an appreciable way.

Completion of their Yourtown social enterprise was also a positive predictor of successful transition to work with 61.3% of the sample moving into full-time employment, or re-engagement with education or further training following their program. Of this group, 89% maintained their employment at the Australian government's standard for being classified as fully employed (13 weeks of continuous full-time work)—with 80.3% still in their employment at 26 weeks post-participation in their social enterprise program. An additional 11.9% of the young people obtained part-time work. The employment and employment sustainability data indicate that these young people also had engaged sufficiently in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to accommodate the task and participation demands of their workplaces.

Second, comparisons of measures at the program entry and exit points showed that the young people had made significant psychosocial improvements that, at least, are suggestive of engagement in learning skills for introspection and for reconnecting with others. Their qualitative accounts of access to wide-ranging learning and developing opportunities through the enterprises matched closely to what Yourtown's management and frontline staff had described as the intended curriculum and success-oriented pedagogy modeled in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Summarized assessments of difference across time for behaviors on two psychosocial scales

Factor	Time	n	Mean[a]	S.D.	Comment
Scale 1: antisocial/social interactions					
F1_Antisocial interactions	Entry	302	2.13	0.87	
	Mid	212	2.14	0.80	
	Exit	212	1.98	0.75	
F2_Social interactions	Entry	304	2.29	0.63	Entry/exit significantly different[a]
	Mid	214	2.09	0.64	
	Exit	211	2.45	0.71	
Scale 2: decision-making and self-control					
F1_Cooperation	Entry	94	2.11	0.92	All significantly different[a]
	Mid	88	3.11	0.68	
	Exit	113	3.14	0.64	
F2_Communication	Entry	143	2.36	0.77	All significantly different[a]
	Mid	109	2.74	0.67	
	Exit	140	2.82	0.65	
F3_Planning	Entry	143	2.49	0.72	Entry and exit significantly different, also entry to mid[a]
	Mid	109	2.90	0.62	
	Exit	144	3.01	0.57	

[a]Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$

The Psychosocial Outcome

Throughout their time with a social enterprise, participants, wherever possible, provided repeated measures of their life and work aspirations; future outlook; self-esteem; well-being; decision-making; agency; language, literacy, and numeracy skills; social interactions; substance abuse; and antisocial behavior. Repeated measures were not possible in all cases because of participant dropout or unavailability at particular times when measures were taken. There was also data impediment through non-responses to some items. Summarized assessments of difference across time for scales calculated from factor analyses for antisocial and social interactions and for decision-making and control are presented in Table 7.2 for all who completed at least two of the measures.

The analysis indicated (1), on the antisocial/social scale, statistical significance of young people's improvement in *social interactions*, with no similar significance in the identified decrease in antisocial interactions, and (2) statistically significant advances at programs' end in *decision-making and self-control* in terms of participants' cooperation, communication, and planning.

While issues such as drug and alcohol use, arguments, physical fighting, and trouble with police each had lessened at statistically significant levels, the combined results for these data show changes that had not factored as a statistically significant change in *antisocial interactions*. This may have been bias-related in that it is

possible that a concentration of young people for whom these issues had been most intense may have been among the 22.6% of participants who did not finish the enterprise. Consequently, these participants had not been included in the exit data where otherwise the possibility for large-scope improvement might have been observed.

Otherwise, it is likely that relational issues such as antisocial interaction may continue to been seen as "normal" and acceptable in marginalized people's life space, which is different from the life space they accessed when they were engaged in the social enterprise. Yourtown had set out to minimize marginalized youths' needs for displays of protection, attack, or retreat mechanisms and to maximize opportunities for discussing such needs in a context of reasonable alternatives. The purpose in this move was to encourage participants' application of better self-regulation in-house and potential for its generalization after day's end. As a case study youth observed,

> I've learnt how to build fences and I've learnt how to control myself when other people give you crap. So now I've learnt how to be calm and ignore them people (BTY3).

However, it may not be realistic to expect that benefits from developments in those experiences would generalize quickly, if at all, to the less positive environments where many of these people live, work, and play. As Kieselbach (2013) theorized, exclusion has many faces, and some of these such as *spatial exclusion*, *cultural exclusion*, or the *submerged economy* exert confining power in the first space and may be counterproductive or delaying forces on participants' consolidation and extension of their third-space personae.

Nonetheless, in light of Kieselbach's (2013) profile, the improvement reflected in findings for Yourtown's "marginalized and without voice" young people across social interactions, decision-making, and self-control areas (Table 7.2) is an important outcome. Components measured in this improvement included the following.

Life and Work

Greater confidence emerged during engagement with the social enterprise in relation to life and work (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4). The youth became absorbed in the work, seeing it as a positive part of their days and lives, recognizing that others saw it as positive, too, and valuing that recognition. As a consequence of this engagement, the young people's views of life goals changed fairly dramatically. Five of the six statements related to desirability of possible outcomes not only seemed far more important to Yourtown's youth at their exit than they had previously (Fig. 7.3), but they, along with the sixth statement, were all now viewed as more likely to occur (Fig. 7.4).

For example, the exit data revealed a strong increase in youths' desire to be in charge, of being their own boss, and of having work. Statistically significant shifts had occurred also in "having a job that society values" (e.g., see the very important
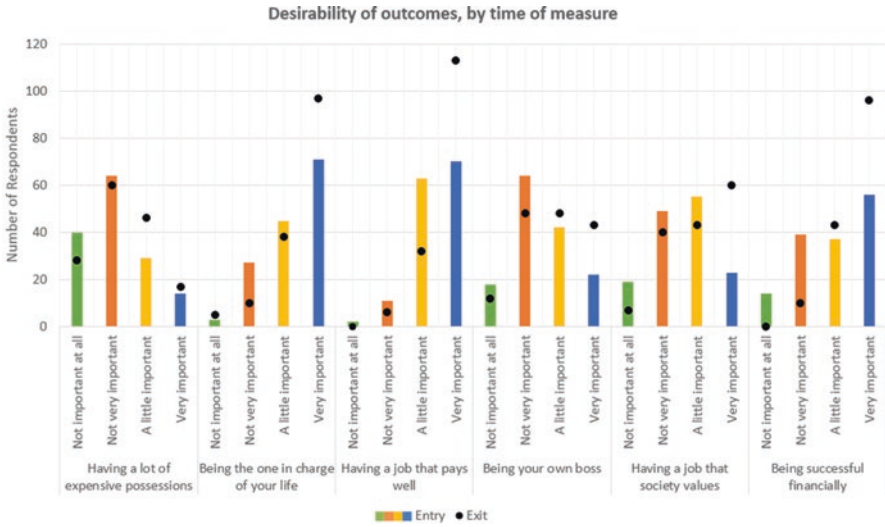
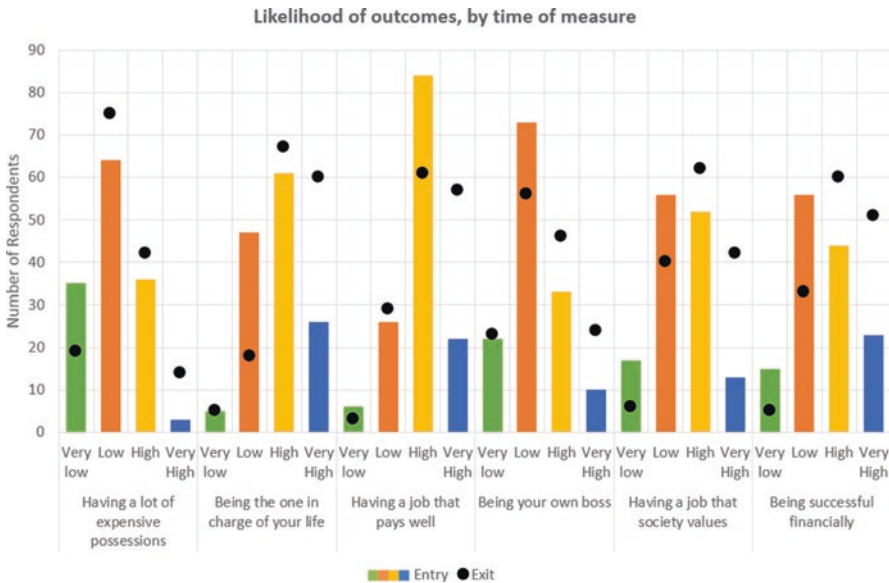**Fig. 7.3** Desirability of outcomes, by time of measure

Fig. 7.4 Likelihood of outcomes, by time of measure

category of Fig. 7.3: 15.8–40.0%), "being financially successful" (38.4–64.4%), and "having a job that pays well" (47.9–74.8%), indicating that so many more of these young people were now setting their vistas higher than on the previous measure. As shown in Fig. 7.4, there was an important and significant upward shift in youths' perceptions that these aspirational outcomes would actually materialize.

Table 7.3 Improvement in participants' self-esteem

Self-esteem	Entry (%)	Exit (%)
On the whole I am satisfied with myself	66.7	82.2
I am able to do things as well as most other people	76.8	88.2
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	40.9	20.4
I certainly feel useless at times	58.1	32
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	79.8	85.9
I wish I could have more respect for myself	57.4	29.7
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	27.6	14.3
I take a positive attitude toward myself	65.4	84.7

Table 7.4 Improvements in participants' well-being

Well-being	Entry (%)	Exit (%)
No longer felt constantly under strain	35.3	56.1
No longer felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties	31.0	57.7
Not feeling unhappy and depressed	41.8	64.0
Not losing confidence in yourself	40.5	68.9
Not thinking of yourself as a worthless person	45.9	72.4
Not losing sleep over worry	45.6	69.0
Been able to concentrate more than usual	14.9	35.8
Felt capable of making decisions more than usual	14.9	39.0
Been able to enjoy normal day-to-day activities more than usual	14.5	22.6
Been able to face up to problems more than usual	7.4	25.3
Felt you were playing a useful part in things more than usual	10.7	35.5
Feeling reasonably happy all things considered more than usual	13.9	30.7

In addition to new outlooks on work-related desires and prospects of their achievement, the re-engaged young people made important gains in their perceptions of their psychosocial selves. Their confidence also increased greatly in relation to an improvement in self-esteem (Table 7.3).

Unlike Mick Jagger's lyric, they now had satisfaction. They also had positive attitudes about who they were, bringing about a greater self-respect, and things to be proud of such as their achievements, big and small, in their social enterprises and greatly reduced feelings of uselessness from those they had revealed at the entry measure.

There were also significant shifts in all measured areas of well-being (Table 7.4) particularly with improvements in participants' perceptions of better concentration, decision-making capability, participating in learning events, enjoyment of what they were doing, facing up to problems, and feeling reasonably happy (Table 7.4). Well-being also was better in the six areas measured on reduction of negative affect. For example, young people had fewer concerns about being constantly under strain, not being able to overcome difficulties, being unhappy and depressed, losing confidence, thinking of themselves as worthless, or losing sleep through worry.

Table 7.5 Significant improvement in participants' decision-making competence

Decision-making	Entry (%)	Exit (%)
When I have a problem, I get the information needed to deal with it	53.8	83.8
I make sure I understand the situation I'm in before making a decision	43.4	77.5
My values are important to me when I make decisions about my future	67.3	88.4
I am in control when I make decisions	62.1	88.9
I use help around me when I make decisions	40.3	79.2
My best decisions are always made when I think about advice from others	36.8	48.0

Youth who had finished the social enterprise journey saw themselves as now making better decisions. They had improved in their relations with others. As shown in Table 7.5, their better decision-making was aligned with greater agency [e.g., *I am in control when I make decisions*] and technique [e.g., *I make sure I understand the situation I'm in before making a decision*; *I use help around me when I make decisions;* and *My values are important to me when I make decisions about my future*]. Unsurprisingly, additional findings showed that the positive changes in decision-making and agency were associated with youths' perceptions that they now were coping better [e.g., *When I have a problem, I get the information needed to deal with it*. There was significant reduction for the negative item, *I have trouble solving everyday problems*], better social communication [e.g., *I feel confident talking to people I have just met; I am good at listening to people and I chat with neighbors*] good personal learning of important skills and functional applications [e.g., *I am good at reading skills, I am good at maths skills, I can identify spelling mistakes easily, I make a budget to help me with my money* and reduction for the negative item, *It is hard for me to fill out forms*].

Personal Futures

Yourtown's young people improved remarkably in their vision of personal futures. They now had future goals (Fig. 7.5). This suggests that their engagement in the learning opportunities of the social enterprises brought positive effects and benefits well beyond dealing with the picks, mattocks, concrete saws, and the immediate successes in the training places.

The incidence of positive social interactions increased. Three of the seven survey items depicting positive social interactions indicated statistically significant improvements over time [*chat with neighbors*; *eat out;* and *meet with friends]* (Fig. 7.5). However, all seven together provided the "social interaction improvement" factor that described youth who had completed the program (see Table 7.2).

The young people's improved social behavior was accompanied by decreases in some of their previous antisocial behavior. For example, the incidence of smoking, alcohol, drugs, physical fights, and trouble with the police all lessened across each
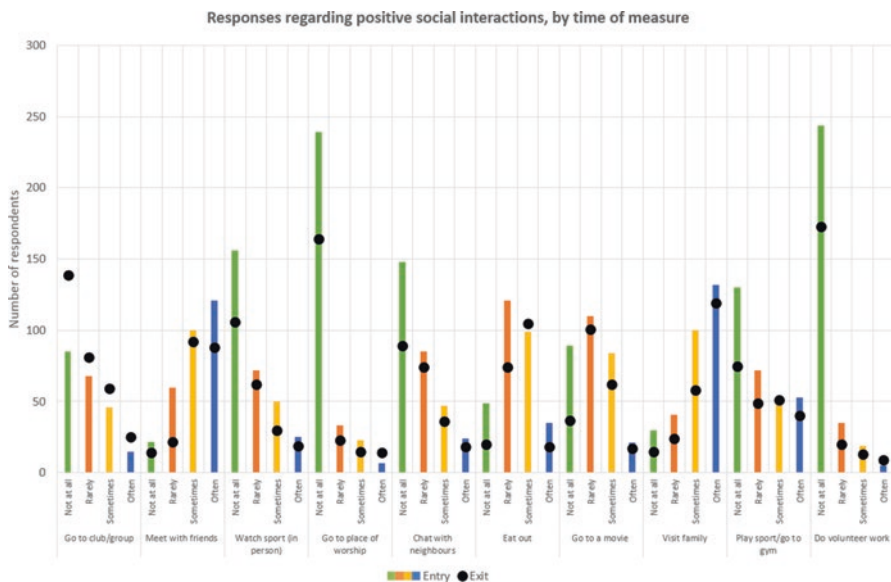
Fig. 7.5 Responses regarding positive social interactions, by time of measure
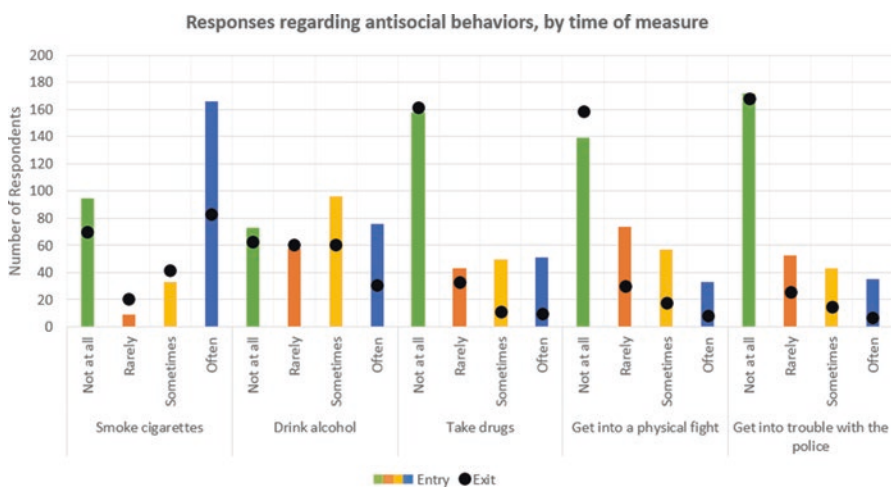

Fig. 7.6 Responses regarding antisocial behaviors, by time of measure

of the three surveys (Fig. 7.6). This indicates significant, positive shifts. However, as revealed earlier, their combination failed to factor into description and prediction of which youth completed the program (Table 7.2).

One Youth's Reflections

Case study data gathered from volunteers provide a depth of individual reflection across experiences that we have attempted to describe here as highly challenged young people engaging with an opportunity to move, with support, into a third-space learning environment. The descriptive data previously presented suggests that many engaged consistently, positively, and productively with the opportunity. Extracts from qualitative accounts have illustrated parts of that engagement and its related perceptions of immediate and possible future benefits. In this final section, one young man (referred throughout the following using a pseudonym, *Jacob*) who was in some ways very like Patrick whom we met at the start of the chapter speaks to his experience of seizing the day and its opportunity to engage, participate, and act.

Jacob said his main need had been to focus on knowledge and practical skills that he now was beginning to access and practice through the horticultural enterprise and with great support from his youth trainer, BTSX. But, he projected a view to the future, too:

> Yeah, I just wanted to learn about different things with trees. 'Cause I've seen a couple of trees I've never actually, I don't even know about them, and, yeah. I just recently learnt about a Blackboy tree which is pretty good. We went to the nursery and done a few things there ... I want to get my licence and then maybe a house or something, yeah.

His curiosity about trees is apparent in the extract. So, too, is that he had linked that motivation with his recent learning. His engagement in the discovery about the Blackboy tree is a continuation of that focus—and his "pretty good" is a value statement. What may have been a small but important step through that engagement seems to have prompted larger aspiration to opportunities, including obtaining his driver's license and a home—but BTY's engagement with work and learning is clear and exciting.

Job/Work Focus

> Yeah actually. I want to learn how to do, like, water fountains better, like, mad landscape. Like, you go to some places and you look at it and you go, 'Oh, that's really nice'. You've got a fountain, a mad, like, little dragon puffing out smoke out its mouth or something; a nice light, a feature on the plants. Plus, I've looked at a few plants that I've noticed I like now. There's one called Chameleon Rose which it grows all different colours and flowers and stuff on it.

This extract further illustrates Jacob's use of the language of learning and the planning and engagement focus it has brought to his activity. His positive connection with gardening coupled with an increasing horticultural confidence and knowledge is compelling in relation to this engagement. Its effect as shown in the following excerpts continues in comments he made about connecting knowledge and

application through practical work with bricks and retaining walls and widening his social circle by meeting new friends through his experience of Yourtown's social enterprise.

New Skills

> Bricklaying, brick edging the garden beds, retaining walls. I've never done that before, but I've done it now. What else is there? Building verandahs for houses. Like I knew how to do that, but I've never done it before. That was my first time that I'd ever done that, at Rosemeadow, and then—just meet new friends and stuff.

He felt that Yourtown had not only widened his experience but also increased his work readiness and ethic. He had noticed, too, that the activity had affected new personal relationships, a notion extended along with moral conduct in the following extract.

Change for the Better

> Yeah, pretty good actually because before this I use to, like, do bad things, like, to make money, like, criminal activity, but now I don't. I just stick to work and have no time for crap like that. Now I've got a girlfriend and yeah.

Jacob talked of legitimate rather than illegitimate activity as his current interest and goal. His talk also included friendship and the importance of having friends.

Goals and Progress

> Well I have four goals this year. Go for my licence, which I haven't done because I've got too much fines; quit marijuana, which I have; and then quit cigarettes, which is hard; and, cut down on drinking. I can only drink every second weekend or third weekend or something.

At the final interview, Jacob was already working to find a job. He had found Yourtown supportive with searching for possible work where he could use his new skills and was hopeful of finding something despite initial disappointment:

> Yeah, they, like, lined a couple of jobs up for me and, yeah I went for a couple of interviews but I just didn't end up getting a job. It's just a bit hard. These days it is anyway, it's hard to get a job.

Although Jacob still had the task ahead of gaining sustainable employment, readers will be gladdened by his joyfulness, positive attitude and approach to learning, and growing his future. That was the case for us as we reflected on his words. His account included at least one important milestone. Like many of his peers, he had

been a welfare recipient for some years before joining Yourtown's horticultural social enterprise program. He took some time to settle in and might easily have joined others who quit their programs and reverted to social welfare. But, he had not done that. He remained and had learned skills and developed insights about what learning was bringing into his life—from discovering the names of trees and flowers that had awakened his curiosity and admiration to procedures like creating water fountains and bricklaying garden edges that added beauty and appeal to his work. He also had become open to positive futures around socialization, mobility, and housing. He had made an evaluative realization about his life that now included a sustainable work ethic, a girlfriend, aspirations, and a learning orientation so very clear in his transcript. His social enterprise group in helping him to see how to engage had provided opportunity for him to watch, learn, think, talk, and act as a learner; to become functional with, in, and through work; and from this base to his assessment of future opportunities.

The work the Yourtown staff and Jacob himself had done and the progress it shaped were systematically organized around a learner-centered agenda, which began with reminding him that he could be successful and inviting him into a third space where he could try doing so in a different way from his previous classroom experiences and what he might otherwise not have viewed as possible. He engaged cognitively, emotionally, and socially in the Yourtown program wherein he found his voice and gained new abilities and a new self. Most importantly, he envisaged a future that was possible and that he valued. His entry, perhaps tentative, was strengthened with authentic work and its inbuilt need for him to skill-up to meet its challenges. His initial engagement in the program might have been temporal and shifting as he was still trapped in his old self. A new contextual dynamic was choreographed by mentor–instructor intent on building on his successes through incremental progression of his program. They educated to this intention modeling engagement and demonstrating and talking with him about it while scaffolding his confidence and competence via action, reflection, and discussion. They invited his thinking and discussion about what he did and how he did it. The program built around him.

He was flourishing. At last. He had recovered belief in learning, and in himself, because of the teachers who had acted as builders.

Conclusion

Why had Patrick and Jacob needed to wait so long to connect with the joys and benefits of learning? How might their experience inform us about handling similar young people who fail to engage with educational opportunities during their schooling? What does their eventual connection tell us about systems such as those that enabled them? These are important questions for framing a view of engagement as a key conceptual factor of human development.

We might look to evidence of Patrick and Jacob's negatively predisposing characteristics (Anlezark, 2011) in venturing that neither nature nor nurture had served them well as infants, children, or early adolescents. Also, it is likely that exclusion of various sorts (Kieselbach, 2013) and possibly as suggested below would have accompanied their impoverished circumstances and limited their opportunities in comparison with many of their classmates. These would be limitations resulting from:

- *Education and training exclusion*—where low levels of build of applicable prior knowledge and qualification and lapsed confidence restricted their progress and/ or its possible continuation in post-compulsory years of schooling and admission to higher education and training programs
- *Submerged opportunity for academic identity* where only occasional academic successes and off-task or out-of-class nonregulated thinking limited their accessible bases of academic recognition, reward, and adoption
- *Intellectual exclusion* through deepening the lag in knowledge and intellectual know-how [the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986) at work in the processes and outcomes of socio-academic activity] deepening their senses of failure and of inevitably lowly futures
- *Pedagogical and institutional exclusion* through lack of realizable support in available pedagogy, through alienation of potential institutional support, and sometimes through overdependency on institutional support
- *Social isolation* through shame and retreat from positively nurturing social and academic networks
- *Cultural exclusion* in being unable to live according to socially accepted norms of the educational system, school, and class
- *Spatial exclusion* from living and having schooling only in a subset of possible places

They had failed as students in their years of compulsory schooling as Anlezark (2011) had foreshadowed, and had been failing as positive and contributing members of community as Kieselbach (2013) had warned.

Yet, as late adolescents both Patrick and Jacob had responded far more constructively to development opportunities. They performed much better in the social enterprise contexts of authentic learning activity that was "them-centered," success-centered, and flexibly enacted. These three features are "engagement-rich" opportunities that Patrick and Jacob recognized and took. They freshened their readiness to try, perceived accessible learning moments, and engaged them through active participation in a step-by-step mastery. A learning–teaching culture where practice is student-centered, success-centered, and flexibly enacted will be well-known to change agents like Bondy and BTSX as productive pedagogy to help disaffected young people in social enterprise environments to re-engage as learners, reconsider their potential and worth as individuals, and reconnect as contributing members of community. It will be recognized also by the many teachers who have noticed a young Patrick or Jacob in their classes and made immediate adjustments to ensure that opportunities of schooling are truly accessible and able to be engaged by all.