

Unstructured Community Approach to Youth Programs:
A Case Study of the Ottawa Police Youth Centre

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to gain a better understanding of how the Ottawa Police Youth Centre functions, by examining its organizational structure, and the links it has created with the community, by means of a case study. The thesis uses organizational theory and studies on youth programs to which the case study is compared. The research examines the Ottawa Police Youth Centre historically, it then describes the present organization and functions, and finally it critically presents the Centre's measures of success.

PREFACE

The idea of researching the Ottawa Police Youth Centre stems from my desire to work on a tangible topic, which was less philosophical and more practical in nature. It does not attempt to break new sociological ground on the dimension of youth in society, but aspires to show how sociological theory can help us better understand how the Youth Centre functions, and especially how it relates to the surrounding community.

The Ottawa Police Youth Centre differs from other youth oriented program in North America. As successful as it may be, it is difficult to describe, as it is forever changing, like any growing organization. I had to continually remind myself that this was not an exhaustive study, as my research lead me to new sources of information. The following research, by process and through content, has taught me a great deal about organizations, government, academia, and especially sociology.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to better understand the Ottawa Police Youth Centre (OPYC).¹ Located at 1465 Prince of Wales Drive in Ottawa, Ontario, the OPYC has attracted the attention of crime prevention agencies, police forces, and municipalities from across North America.² At a local level, it has gained much support from social workers, municipal officials, school officials, members of the police department, and community members.

The OPYC opened its doors in May of 1990. Since that time, it has developed into a very active youth centre offering activities and programs aimed at improving police-youth and police-community relations, as well as providing youth with encouragement, positive influence, life skills, and attitude adjustment. Thus, the OPYC seeks to help: 1) defer young offenders; 2) youth realize their importance in the community; and 3) encourage attitudes of responsibility, cooperation and belonging in youth (OPYC, 1994b). As urban and suburban communities are faced with a growing number of social and economic problems, governments and public service administrators are seeking more efficient and more practical means of addressing issues such as poverty, school drop-outs, single parent

¹Referred to throughout the text as the Centre, the Youth Centre, or the OPYC.

²The Director of the OPYC is often asked to speak about the Centre to area groups and to provide documentation about it to agencies elsewhere in Canada and the United States.

families, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and delinquency. The relationship between the problems of urban youth and communities is being approached at a grass-roots level, emphasizing programs which are both community based and administered at a local level. The problems within a community and the problems of youth are interrelated, and therefore must be addressed simultaneously in any effort to reduce their occurrence.

As a youth centre, the OPYC is original in its design and operation as it was created by the Ottawa Police Service³, and yet functions quite independently from it. Although it often works in conjunction with national, and locally established youth oriented organizations, it is not affiliated with them, and therefore is not constrained by a large governing body or bureaucratic organization. It is a centre which adapts to the needs of the community's youth, based on the primary problems affecting both the youth and the community at any given moment. The OPYC's priorities are constantly changing in response to the needs and interests of the youth as the latter's interest in the Youth Centre depends on the OPYC's ability to respond quickly and effectively to those changing needs.

There is a limited amount of information available about community based youth centres and their roles within the community. The OPYC has not been the subject of any formal study or evaluation, and therefore an extremely limited amount of information is available about the Youth Centre. Its success has been defined by attendance records, the

³During the course of this research the Ottawa Police Service amalgamated with the Gloucester Police and Nepean Police, to become the Ottawa Carleton Regional Police Service. The use of the different titles reflects the different periods of time.

community's involvement in the Centre, the variety of activities and programs as well as the high levels of participation demonstrated by local youth, and measurable results proposed by the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, such as area crime statistics.

a. The purpose of the research and research question

This research will use both a sociological and anthropological perspective in examining the Ottawa Police Youth Centre (OPYC). In defining the research question, the researcher poses the following primary questions:

- 1) Why was the OPYC created?
- 2) How was the OPYC originally set up?
- 3) How is the OPYC now organized, and how does it function?
- 4) What formal and informal links has it established with the community?

These questions remain at the basis of this thesis, and will provide the groundwork for the research strategy. In trying to answer these questions, the researcher will consider how the OPYC's goals are established, defined, and prioritized throughout the ongoing evolution of the Youth Centre.

The main objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the OPYC and the means by which it functions. The research is threefold. First it will attempt to illustrate the historical and social context in which the OPYC was originally created and developed. Secondly, it will identify the characteristics of the Youth Centre's structure and programs which are said to have led to its success in providing services to youth. Thirdly,

it will qualify the links that have been established with the community. In doing so, it is hypothesized that the informal organization of the Centre, and its flexible mandate, permit it to respond effectively to the needs of the community's youth. Thus, we must ask whether or not the informal organization of the OPYC is conducive to its ability to respond to community problems and youth interests. The Youth Centre's ability to adapt to changing needs will be explored with the use of sociological theory related to groups and organizations.

b. Methodology

The Director of the OPYC was approached in the month of November, 1994, with the idea of doing a case study of the organization. With his approval, the study was then mentioned by the researcher to all staff members to get initial feedback on the idea. The informal proposal was very well received by all parties, and research began by late January of 1995

An examination of the literature relating to youth diversionary programs, youth drop-in centres, and their organization was completed. The review raised two major questions about the OPYC. First, does the OPYC adopt a structure based on a formal organization, or is it built on a less rigid model as it seems to appear at first sight. Second, does the OPYC identify with the characteristics of other successful programs as they have been

reviewed by professionals from different fields that are related to work with youth. As will be demonstrated, many elements relative to successful programs are compatible with a less formalized approach to an organization's structure. The question posed, is whether this statement can apply to the OPYC.

The researcher has chosen the case study, based on a sociological and anthropological approach, in order to obtain an holistic view of the OPYC. As the research seeks to identify how tasks are carried out within the OPYC, the observations within the Youth Centre focus on an institutional understanding of how staff functions, how links are established between staff as well as between the Centre and the community. The research involves three means of gathering data. First, the collection and examination of media reports, including newspaper articles and television news clips, municipal documents, and archival documents from the OPYC to gain insight into the history of the Centre and the community. Secondly, on sight observation of the Centre, its programs and activities, as well as direct observation of staff meetings and Youth Council meetings, which will identify the means by which the OPYC functions. Observations focused on how the Youth Centre is structured, how staff communicate, and what goals existed at the Centre. Thirdly, the OPYC's Board of Trustees were observed during two council meetings, including one meeting of the Executive committee. Once Board meetings were attended, and past meeting minutes examined, general issues were discussed with members of the Board to better understand the Board's mandate, their role in the operations of the OPYC, and their general impact on the OPYC. Fourthly, the researcher spoke with staff, members of the Board of

Trustees, program leaders, personnel from local schools, members of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, and community members about their roles with and at the Youth Centre, in order to provide a clear understanding of how the OPYC functions, how it is supported, and how it affects other elements of the community.

As a case study, the research is both exploratory and descriptive. It is exploratory in the sense that it will identify general questions about community programs and youth, will build a basic understanding of the organization of the OPYC, and will identify important research topics for the future which are beyond the scope of this thesis. The research however is primarily descriptive, as it will explain the development and maintenance of the OPYC's programming and activities, by looking at the community and the OPYC historically. In so doing, the research will provide a clear understanding of how the OPYC is organized and structured, as well as how its grass-roots approach to youth and community functions.

Chapter 1

THE FRAMEWORK - THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The theoretical framework is built into two themes. First, a comparison between the characterizing elements of both the small group and the formal organization will help determine what type of structure the OPYC has, and will help us determine whether its organization assists in its ability to provide services. Second, an overview of elements which define successful youth programs provides the basis for a model to which the OPYC may be compared once it has been studied.

a. The small group versus the formal organization

The research will make use of sociological theory that focuses on groups and organizations to better examine the structure and the functioning of the OPYC. The Youth Centre is often referred to as a grass-roots approach to providing youth programs, and prides itself on the absence of a large bureaucracy. One theory of particular interest is Weber's characteristics of bureaucratic organizations, which will help determine whether the OPYC functions as a small group, or as a formal organization.

Weber defines bureaucracy by the following characteristics: the presence of jurisdictional areas ordered by rules and regulations, a hierarchy of offices or functions, formal written communications which provide documentation and records, a division of tasks and functions in which there is specialization, a formal and impersonal approach, a technical competence, and the full working capacity of the official (Weber, 1968: 956-958). Weber believes that bureaucracy dehumanizes the persons the institution is aimed at helping by treating each individual as a standard case, and alienates those who work in the organization (Macionis, Clark, and Gerber, 1994: 196). Though bureaucracies may take different forms in different societies, they remain dedicated to efficiency and are structurally goal oriented. In comparison, the small group is usually based on primary relationships which are more personal and less formal in nature, thus the focus remains person oriented. The characterizing traits of the bureaucracy are reflected in the following table (Table 1.1) which compares the small group to the formal organization, and which will serve as a tool in examining the OPYC.

Table 1.1

Small Groups and Formal Organizations: A Comparison

	Small Groups	Formal Organizations
Activities	Members typically engage in many of the same activities	Members typically engage in various highly specialized activities
Hierarchy	Often informal or nonexistent	Clearly defined, corresponding to offices
Norms	Informal application of general norms	Clearly defined rules and regulations
Criteria for membership	Variable, often based on personal affection or kinship	Technical competence to carry out assigned tasks
Relationships	Variable; typically primary	Typically secondary, with selective primary ties
Communications	Typically casual and face to face	Typically formal and in writing
Focus	Person oriented	Task oriented

(Macionis, Clarke, and Gerber, 1994: 195)

The types of relationships youth develop is of great interest to those dealing with high risk youth, as it has a strong impact on their social behaviour. The identification of the relationships existing within the OPYC will be based on the following table, which differentiates between the primary and secondary reference groups. The reference group is considered, "a social group that serves as a point of reference for people making evaluations or decisions." (Macionis, Clarke, and Gerber, 1994: 187) Identifying the type of reference group which is typical at the OPYC will aid in defining the Youth Centre's structure.

Table 1.2

Primary Groups and Secondary Groups: A Summary

	Primary Group	Secondary Group
Quality of relationships	Personal orientation	Goal orientation
Duration of relationships	Usually long term	Variable; often short term
Breadth of Relationships	Broad; usually involving many activities	Narrow; usually involving few activities
Subjective perception of relationships	As an end in itself	As a means to an end
Typical examples	Families; close friendships	Co-workers; political organization

(Macionis, Clarke, and Gerber, 1994: 184)

If it can be determined that the Youth Centre functions on the basis of a small group, it may suggest the existence of a community action versus a purposive association as proposed by Toennies (Cosser, 1977; Macionis, Clarke, and Gerber, 1994) as the Centre's focus, and the focus of those involved with it, would be primarily person oriented instead of goal oriented. In determining the structure of the OPYC, the research will provide an indication of how the group functions in the seven key areas listed in Table 1.1: Activities, hierarchy, norms, criteria for membership, relationships, communications, and focus. Throughout this examination, the notion of goals will also be considered.

Concentrating on the popular idea that the OPYC is absent of a bureaucratic organization, this research will establish the validity of that belief, and then examine whether or not rules that may be established at the OPYC for its patrons modify or change

its original intentions and mandate. Does conformity to such rules, take precedence over the original goals set by the Youth Centre, or are they in keeping with overall objectives? Thus in examining the OPYC's structure this research will provide insight as to whether or not the OPYC shows signs of bureaucratic ritualism, which is "a preoccupation with rules and regulations as ends in themselves rather than as the means to organizational goals." (Macionis, Clarke, and Gerber, 1994: 198) Ritualism has three major effects on an organization: it decreases creativity, efficiency, and the ability to deal with changing circumstances. Bureaucratic ritualism is an indication of goal displacement as proposed by Merton when, "an instrumental value becomes a terminal value." (Merton, 1967: 199) In understanding the OPYC's structure, and how it functions, by use of the above tables, the research will help consider how the Centre, and its organization relates to the characteristics of successful youth programs.

b. Characteristics of successful youth centres and programs

Authors from varying fields have identified problems associated with providing services for, and working with youth, especially high risk youth. The characteristics of successful youth programs have been articulated by these authors. In examining these characteristics, a model will be created to determine whether or not the OPYC conforms to the majority of these elements.

There does exist a debate over what can be defined as a successful program, due in part to a lack of empirical evidence on particular programs showing they have achieved a planned and predicted effect. This lack of proof may be due to a number of reasons. Authors may base their descriptions on limited studies of particular programs. These studies may not be complete as they may only measure how the program modified a person's attitude or knowledge, but not necessarily the person's behaviour (Dryfoos, 1990: 117). Other studies may not provide any conclusion as they are on-going and based over a lengthy period of time in order to track the sample of their study to determine the long term effects of the particular program. Other studies simply do not involve a large enough sample or do not involve a control group with which to compare the sample, thus they are unable to make any generalizations to the population in general. The issue of using a control group is highly debated in the field of social work as it requires withholding services from a selective group while studying the difference between the those who obtain the required help and those who do not (Dryfoos, 1990: 117). The main problem in defining the success of a program is the number of uncontrolled variables which may influence the results. Youth which require assistance for a particular problem are likely to require assistance for other problems as well. As different programs are having a simultaneous effect on an individual, it becomes all the more difficult to track the effect of the particular program or action on the targeted problem. Questions may be raised concerning the possibility of cross effects, or effects brought on by the capitalization of resources from different programs.

In looking at long term research challenges in the evaluation of social work, Cheethan, Fuller, McIvor, and Petch (1992) identify three important issues that need to be addressed: 1) capturing the content of social work; 2) comparing the impact of changing interventions; and 3) tracing the relationship between intervention and outcome (1992: 140). They discuss the value of small studies and state that, "their comparison with larger-scale research is enhanced by the systematic review and synthesis of findings which general trends may be detected while allowances are made for differences in studies' focus and methods." (1992: 144) They also state that, "the contribution of small, focused studies is considerable in encouraging practical interest in identifying the purposes of interventions, their form and impact." (1992: 144)

Joy Dryfoos, in her book Adolescents at Risk: Prevalence and Prevention (1990) has examined over a hundred programs aimed at adolescents at risk. A majority of the programs chosen provided evaluation data that displayed improvements in social behaviour or scholastic achievements, or reductions in substance abuse or unprotected sexual intercourse (Dryfoos, 1990: 227). However, Dryfoos adds that "twenty of the programs were included as examples of new interventions based on proven theories of behavioral change but with incomplete evaluations." (Dryfoos, 1990: 227) As well, she has examined the "what works" literature in the four program areas: prevention of juvenile delinquency; prevention of substance abuse; prevention of pregnancy; and prevention of school failure and dropping out (Dryfoos, 1990: 116). Based on her research, the common elements of successful prevention programs are as follows (Dryfoos, 1990: 228-233, 241-243):

1-Early and continuous intensive individualized attention which may link professional and nonprofessional adults to youth, strengthening the importance of community.

2-Community wide multi-agency collaborative approaches which should include a combination of program components with the intention of changing institutional roles.

3-Early identification and intervention in the early stages of problem behaviour, especially at the preschool and elementary school levels, with an emphasis on early needs assessment.

4-Locus [presence] in schools.

5-Administration of school programs by agencies outside of schools.

6-Location of programs outside of schools, as many models are community based.

7-Attention to staff training and development.

8-Social skills training.

9-Engagement of peers in interventions with youth.

10-Involvement of parents, especially through home visits and in specifically designed roles.

11-Link to the world of work through curricula, job experience, and volunteer community service.

The dichotomy between programs based in schools and those located outside of school reflects the differing needs of high-risk youth and the ability to reach them effectively by different means (Dryfoos, 1990: 241). Dryfoos believes that the differences between the experts theories of what works and practices of successful programs are not substantive. The opinions of experts tend to be more generalized than the conclusion taken from Dryfoos' review of particular programs (Dryfoos, 1990: 234).

A comparison between Dryfoos' findings and the definition of successful programs by other authors shows a consistency in the conclusions. Dryfoos, herself, comments on the compatibility of her findings with the conclusions of Schorr and Schorr (Dryfoos, 1990: 242). The latter found that the characteristics of successful interventions are not limited to the content of the actual programs, but suggest that they include having trained, skilled, and committed staff, reducing the problems imposed by bureaucracy, avoiding duplicate programs that are diluted. Focus on how a program is set up, who it is run by, how it is administered, and for whom it is administered, is essential in producing successful youth programs which benefit both the youth and the community (Schorr and Schorr, 1989). Similarly, Heath and McLaughlin (1993) suggest that community based organizations must: 1) be inclusive and proactive; 2) shield against neighbourhood life; 3) have a local construction of identity; 4) have a positive conception of youth; 5) be stable, consistent, and caring; 6) be flexible and responsive; and 7) have dedicated, outgoing, and charismatic leaders. The preceding points, and the importance of a community based approach can be better understood through Jones' explanation of how youth may find the community or neighbourhood meaningful. He states that the neighbourhood is meaningful in four ways as it provides: 1) a setting for peer group encounters and activities which are not family or home related; 2) a basis for leisure and play which is accessible; 3) an informal forum and arrangement for the peer group to meet which does not require pre-planning or organization; 4) a consistent link among changing leisure groups and activities (Jones, 1980: 167). This reinforces the argument of providing youth programs by means of a community approach, as it uses a social sphere which is not foreign to the area kids. Jones then

identifies four advantages to working with youth in the context of the neighbourhood. He believes that programs will be more acceptable to adolescents, will help the individual better cope with the problem, as the programs are located in the context in which the problem occurs, will increase the adolescent's problem solving capacity and will create fewer problems as it is less likely to ostracize the individual and acts in a preventative manner, and will mobilize community resources and may foster community responsibility (Jones, 1980: 173). Thus, the community based approach is generally more acceptable to the target population, as it seeks not to remove the individual and treat them, but rather to identify and offer alternative actions or reactions to a given situation. This becomes all the more easy by use of local facilities and in working with natural friendship groups, both of which are more familiar (Jones, 1980).

A synthesis of the authors' conclusions suggests five main themes in characterizing successful youth programs. First the importance of the relationship established between youth and those individuals animating the program focuses not only on the type of relationship, but also on the intensity or strength of it. Second, the importance of having positive role models and peers, including parents and trained staff, dedicated in time and effort. Third, the importance of a community approach in providing services as it provides a more holistic view which is less imposing and more inviting and familiar to youth. With community roots, a program built around global problems within the particular community context will help in reinforcing identity and self-esteem. Fourth, the importance of social skills training which reflects a positive view of youth and community. The ability to link

a program with the "real" world of work and responsibilities is important in reinforcing the pertinence of those skills in youth. Fifth, the importance of having a program and staff which is flexible enough to continuously adapt to different situations, and to react quickly and effectively to changing needs. By examining the OPYC and its organization, this research will help determine whether its unstructured approach to youth, has permitted the Youth Centre to identify with these five main characteristics.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND TO THE CREATION OF THE OTTAWA POLICE YOUTH CENTRE

In order to provide a comprehensive view of how the OPYC originated, it is important to have a description of the community in which it is located. A basic knowledge of the events which called on police to have a more active role in the community, and a description of how the OPYC originally began to take form, will set the groundwork for a clear understanding of the Centre's present structure.

a. The area and community - a description

The OPYC is located in an abandoned fire station commonly referred to as the "Old Fire Hall", on the edge of the Debra-Dynes community, in the city of Ottawa. It is situated at the intersection of Prince of Wales Drive, Meadowlands Drive and Hogs Back Road on the south-east corner. On the opposite corner to the west of the Youth Centre is a gas station and a strip mall, containing a McDonald's fast food outlet. On the corner to the north-west is another gas station, a four storey office building with a small mall on its ground floor, a five storey professional building and two high rise apartment buildings.

Also to the north-west is a residential area known as the Debra-Dynes community. On the corner to the north are four apartment buildings ranging from 17 to 23 floors in height and each composed of approximately 170 to 370 units. The back of the Youth Centre faces east towards the Ottawa Canoe Club located on Mooney's Bay. Across the Rideau river, and the bay, is a large park, an outdoor track and field centre and a beach. Within a one kilometre radius there are two elementary schools, one secondary school, and one separate school, but within a three kilometre radius of the Centre the total number of schools jumps to twenty-three: eleven elementary schools, four secondary schools, and eight separate schools.

The Debra-Dynes area is characterized by a row housing project, duplexes and some single family homes. Of the town houses, 188 units are subsidized housing owned by the Government of Ontario and managed by Ottawa-Carleton Housing.⁴ The project and surrounding area are located within the same census tract as the Central Experimental Farm and Carleton University, but represents the majority of residential area covered by the tract.⁵ The census data from 1991, based on a 20% sample, indicates that the area adjacent to the OPYC to the north-west, is characterized by a 19.7% incidence of low income economic

⁴Ottawa-Carleton Housing was formerly called the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Housing Authority.

⁵Ottawa-Hull Census Tract 002.01 is the basis for the following statistics. It does not reflect the complete area surrounding the OPYC, nor does it represent the place of residence of the whole population attending the OPYC. The census tract was selected as it represents the area and youth which were originally targeted by the creation of the Youth Centre. An examination of membership by area in February 1994, shows that 41% of the 312 registered members of the OPYC were from the Debra-Dynes area.

families⁶, and a 40% incidence of low income unattached individuals (Statistics Canada, 1994: 38). This compares to an 11.5% incidence of low income economic families, and a 33.3% incidence of low income unattached individuals for the Census Metropolitan Area of Ottawa-Hull (Statistics Canada, 1994: 18). The area also shows a higher incidence of persons in low income family units, the difference is 27.5% for the area around Debra-Dynes, compared to 14.5% for the area of Ottawa-Hull (Statistics Canada, 1994: 38, 18).

b. Reasons for the creation of the Ottawa Police Youth Centre

In the mid 1980's the Debra-Dynes community of Ottawa was plagued by drug dealing. The area bordered by Meadowlands Drive and Prince of Wales Drive, was the site of a drive through drug market worth an estimated one million dollars a year. The presence of drug dealers and buyers, which included minors, in the community created other social problems and more criminal activity including violence. "The impact from drugs was far reaching, as it was the carrier that hosted an array of other crimes such as break and enter, auto theft and assaults." (OPYC, 1994: 1)

In the summer of 1988, an undercover police officer, working in narcotics, was shot during an arrest in the Debra-Dynes project. In response to the area's drug related problems

⁶An economic family, "Refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption." (Statistics Canada, 1994: 222)

including the shooting of the police officer, meetings and focus groups were held with police, community representatives, and city officials. The conclusion was two tiered: "The primary objectives for police activity should be to control the local drug trade while simultaneously introducing diversionary programs for young people." (OPYC, 1994: 1)

The urgent need of action was reinforced after an incident involving the shooting of a second police officer in the same community in September of 1988. It was then decided to organize a task force of police officers to implement a zero tolerance policy in the Debra-Dynes community and surrounding area. A number of police raids, which came to an end in 1989, were organized as part of the crack down on drug dealing. Police statistics show that in 1988, there were a total of 57 individuals arrested and charged with drug related crimes, whereas by 1993, the number had fallen to zero.

The effort to form the OPYC was initiated by Ottawa Police Deputy Chief, Jim Bickford, who at the time was the Staff Inspector in charge of the Community Service Branch of the Ottawa Police. He was assisted by the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Housing Authority and the Debra-Dynes Community Association. It was believed that a police sponsored youth centre set up in an area with problems which involved police quite frequently, could help encourage better relations between police officers and the children and youth of the community, as well as defuse problems, or problem behaviour before they occurred. Some outreach programs were available to area kids at the Fire Hall prior to the establishment of the OPYC, through the intermittent presence of outreach workers from the

Youth Services Bureau (YSB)⁷. Though the area youth had access to youth counselling, advocacy, and referral services through the outreach program, many did not consider the area a safe place to hang out.

The creation of the OPYC is due to the convergence of three major factors: There was a strong interest on behalf of community members to address the issue of crime, violence, and problems related to youth. As well, there was the combination of a movement within the Ottawa Police to establish more community oriented policing projects, and a desire on behalf of some within the Ottawa Police to create, even if only for a trial period, a place where kids could interact with police officers in a positive environment. At the time the OPYC opened, Bickford reinforced the importance of positive police interaction with the kids from the Debra-Dynes area, when he was quoted by the Ottawa Citizen, as saying that, "this is an area where police contact is frequent and in the eyes of the children, not always positive." (Bickford, in Kessel, 1990) He also suggested that, "the negative impact police have had in the area could be countered through the community-based contact." (Bickford, in Kessel, 1990) The possibility of creating a safe place for youth to gather and hang out in a area plagued with delinquent behaviour, became a viable objective with the availability of a location adjacent to the target community and familiar to the area kids.

⁷The Youth Services Bureau is a non-profit agency providing services to individuals aged 5 to 24 and their families. Programs include individual and family counselling, group support for separation and divorce, social skills, violence, drugs and alcohol, and parenting skills. Outreach is provided by workers visiting areas where youth gather. The outreach program offered at the Fire Hall continued even after the creation of the OPYC.

c. How the Ottawa Police Youth Centre was originally set up

The original idea in creating the Youth Centre was to set it up as an athletic facility open to the area's youth, where off duty police officers could go to work out, and where on duty officers could stop by during their shifts. This, it was thought would improve the kids view of the police and the officers would serve as positive role models to the youth. The process of developing the Centre however, did not follow a set plan other than trying to achieve certain objectives with limited funds, and with a facility which was both in need of repair and only available temporarily from the City of Ottawa. The original objectives were simple: attract kids from the project to the Centre, and encourage them to use it, all while making a connection with them through simple contact oriented through games and sport. The absence of a defined plan led to a trial and error approach in establishing what area youth would like to do at the Youth Centre. Two police officers, constables John Radmore and Brian Edge, were given the task of setting up the OPYC, and to make it work. Both officers were assigned to the Community Services Branch, and were to work on the OPYC on a part-time basis, in addition to their other police duties within the branch.

In order to open up the Centre, a number of improvements had to be made to the building and both basic office equipment and sports equipment had to be acquired. The rooms to be occupied by the OPYC had to be painted, carpeted, and cleaned as some were filled with debris, like broken windows, from the building itself. Funds were required for the minor renovations and equipment. After a presentation from Jim Bickford, the Ottawa

Police Commission donated the sum of forty five hundred dollars. An amount equalled by Ottawa City Council. This money, along with donations from the community, like the Ottawa Police Association's donation of weight lifting equipment, provided the base on which the Centre would eventually grow. The Youth Centre opened after approximately 6 months of preparation, which involved community organizations and private companies donating materials and workmanship.

In the first two years of operation, the Centre was open only in the evenings during the week and was closed on weekends.⁸ Police officers with the Patrol division were asked to stop by during their shifts while patrolling the area, this however did not gain much success for a few reasons. Mainly, officers had to log in their presence at the Centre while on patrol, but to consistently make a presence at the OPYC during a shift was demanding on their time at a moment when resources were scarce, as platoons were short of officers, and there was a large shortage of personnel. People were also canvased for their participation at the Centre as volunteers. Police officers were strongly encouraged to volunteer, so that there would be at least one off duty police officer present per evening. The Rideau Canoe Club also had volunteers present at the Centre. These were athletes training for a position on Team Canada's rowing team for the Olympic games in Barcelona, Spain, and they provided guidance and training tips while being able to use the training equipment for their workouts. Unfortunately, both sources of volunteers began to dwindle as it was difficult to petition them to attend and to coordinate their involvement, mainly due

⁸Hours of operation vary during this period. The Centre was usually open during week nights from approximately 17h30 to 20h30 or 18h00 to 21h00.

to a loss of enthusiasm for volunteering because of other personal priorities, and by the fact that their schedules did not coincide with the needs of the Centre. The athletes for example would train during the day when the OPYC was not open. When the athletes were present during opening hours, they were unable to train seriously. In the fall of 1990, in looking for a more structured approach to having volunteers present at the Centre, a teacher from the Department of Recreation at Algonquin College who was also familiar with the area, and the constables running the OPYC, organized student participation at the Centre. Overall, approximately fifteen students got involved at the OPYC, gauging the interests of the youth who attended, and participating with them in the various activities. The Algonquin College students' attendance was tracked, for their involvement in the OPYC led to a community service credit (OPYC, 1994: 2). Unfortunately in 1991, the students' official participation at the Youth Centre ended as it, "was determined that too many systemic barriers existed which hindered the program's development and limited returns." (OPYC, 1994: 2) Although still open only during the evenings, it was determined that there was a necessity for the presence of a full-time staff member.

The Ottawa-Carleton Regional Housing Authority was approached in 1991 for funding to hire a person from the community to work at the Youth Centre as a "facility attendant" during the Centre's hours of operation, a fifteen hour week. This position lasted for approximately a year, until funds ran out. Later in the year of 1991, the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa got involved with the Centre. The club was approached by the Jim Bickford of the Ottawa Police to hire a full time employee on behalf of the Ottawa Police,

and the Boys and Girls Club would take over the administrative tasks of the Centre, but still only over a fifteen hour work week. The OPYC was able to make the request thanks to a donation of ten thousand dollars provided by the investment firm Wood Gundy.

During the first two years of operation, a number of constables were assigned to the OPYC. About a year after constables Radmore and Edge had set up the program, they were replaced by a number of other officers, but the new assignees were still only working at the Centre on a part-time basis,⁹ and still reported directly to the head of the community services branch, Jim Bickford, on any matters relating to the Centre instead of to the sergeant or staff sergeant. The problems of liability and the need to have a more structured and committed approach to the organization of the OPYC, required a more permanent approach to the Centre's staffing. Although there are no written records of attendance prior to the second year of operation, it is estimated that the Youth Centre received during its first year approximately ten to twenty kids per day, and by the end of the second year fifteen to thirty per day, from about ninety members who would attend the Centre.

The OPYC demonstrated a lot of potential within the first two years of operation, but in order to build upon that potential, the Ottawa Police Service realized it would have to make a solid commitment to the Centre to not only continue the program, but to invest personnel into it so that it may reach its full potential. The commitment came in the

⁹Note that the designation of part-time involvement refers to their assignment to the Centre, and does not reflect the actual time invested in preparing the facility and securing funds and equipment.

assignment of a police officer, constable Claude Turgeon, to the Centre to take over the operations on a full-time basis in December of 1992. Although the Boys and Girls Club no longer provided staffing for the Centre, its relationship with the OPYC remained strong with cooperating efforts made in sending kids to Camp Minwassin. Constable Turgeon's experience with youth includes working as a case worker with the Children's Aid Society, and as a counsellor at the William Hay Detention Centre for youth. His approach to organizing the OPYC is based on three main premises: 1) the use of sports and recreation as a means of getting youth involved; 2) a strong commitment to youth; and 3) the need for a minimum of bureaucracy in the decision making process. These ideas materialized in a new energetic approach to the OPYC, which demonstrated an aggressive approach to make things work by capitalizing on what had already been developed at the Centre when he assumed its directorship. Two examples of constable Turgeon's direct approach, are his arrival at the Youth Centre with a power saw to cut a window in a wall so that the room could be used by kids all while being observed by staff, and his decision and action to have the outdoor basketball court paved. This caused a stir with the city of Ottawa which complained that the paving did not get proper authorization because the building was still the property of the City of Ottawa, regardless of the fact that the city was contemplating the tearing down of the building.

The new Director's no nonsense attitude was apparent to those attending the Youth Centre too, as he had laid down the ground rules: No swearing, no smoking, no drinking, no fighting. Infraction of the rules could include a person's dismissal from the Centre for

a number of days, if such an action was warranted. This did not deter youth from attending though, as a strong emphasis on sports and recreation, and a consistent and active presence by constable Turgeon began to attract more and more kids, and more public attention.

Chapter 3

PRESENT ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE OTTAWA POLICE YOUTH CENTRE

The OPYC is not a clearly defined organization, as it does not as yet have an officially established and documented mandate within the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service. It is clear however, that the Youth Centre's primary objective is to "promote positive relationships between youth and police", and in attaining this objective its secondary goals are, "to reduce crime and develop positive life skills." (OPYC, 1995) Thus by providing diversionary activities and comprehensive programs for youth, the Centre simultaneously, if not consequently, improves police relations in the community. The Youth Centre began operating as a trial project, and as it has grown, has tried to determine what works and what does not, when dealing with youth in a problem area. Its trial and error approach was the basis of its activities, and also of the Centre's general organization. In order to change elements of its programming quickly, it has tried to avoid any bureaucratic wrangling which may impede its ability to function quickly. With the increasing attendance and the subsequent growth of the OPYC's budget, the Centre's organization became more structured. Though the Youth Centre, and its organization are continuously developing, structurally, two elements are consistent within the operations of the centre: 1) the presence of dedicated staff members; and 2) the use of sports and recreation as a means of diversion.

The Fire Hall's status, until just recently, was highly debated by members of Ottawa City Council, members of the community, and by the supporters, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees of the OPYC. Although it had been proposed as early 1989 that the site be the location of a new seniors housing project, it was not until a vote by Ottawa City Council was to occur in 1993 that members in the community began to take notice of the threat the seniors housing project posed to the Youth Centre. A petition was signed by the supporters of the OPYC to stop the project, an initiative which rallied support and pride for the Youth Centre, as well as bringing a lot of media attention to it.¹⁰ Throughout 1993 and 1994, Council, and the community became divided over the fate of the Fire Hall. The decision was finally taken to leave the Fire Hall on the site and to permit the OPYC to lease it. With the exception of the full-time salaries, and the costs related to the use of the Centre's twelve passenger van, the Youth Centre now assumes all of its own expenses, including the costs related to the building like the cost of renovations and maintenance, as well as the costs related to the programs and services offered.

The Fire Hall is a large facility, but which may be threatened to be outgrown by the ever growing OPYC. The main room of the Youth Centre is the old garage area of the fire station. At the present time, the Centre has two pool tables, a ping pong table, a chesterfield, chairs, and a small interior gym surrounded by hockey rink height boards, with a single basket ball back board. Three smaller rooms are located off of the main area. One room is used primarily for arts and crafts, the second room has a small library, a television

¹⁰Media reports about the Centre include newspaper articles, television news features and clips.

and a video cassette recorder, and the third room acts as an entrance area with a coin operated video game, pin ball machine, and soft drink machine. There are other rooms available to be used as needed, but they are without a primary function for the Youth Centre though they are shared by other community groups. The Youth Centre uses these rooms occasionally for meetings, counselling, and for the homework club for studying as they are not directly adjacent to the main areas and are therefore much quieter. There are some kitchen facilities available, but they have not been used by OPYC programs to date, though there is an interest on the part of the older members to have cooking workshops. The office is a large room in which a computer, printer, and telephone are used by staff members, and where the kids put their coats and bags. Outside, the OPYC is equipped with an outdoor basketball court, and hockey boards during the summer period.¹¹

a. Organizational structure: Staff, and the Board of Trustees

The OPYC has a very flexible structure which responds to the organization's needs. The Youth Centre is directed by a police officer and is staffed by civilians. A Board of Trustees advises and assists on a financial, legal, and social matters, but it does not have any direct role in the Centre's management which is left to the Director.¹² Any specialized

¹¹The City of Ottawa removes the boards from the Fire Hall and installs them elsewhere during the winter.

¹²The Board of Trustees controls the OPYC's funds, but is not a management board.

human resources that may be required are called upon from outside the Youth Centre to assist. On a day to day basis the Centre is managed by the staff, and unless a large sum of money is required, the highest level of decision making is the Director. If the cost of an initiative is above five hundred dollars, the Board must vote on the allocation of funds. Though the Director reports to his superiors at the Ottawa Police, the day to day management of the Youth Centre is relatively independent of the Police Service.

The number of staff members employed at the OPYC varies depending upon the time of year, and the particular needs of the Youth Centre at any given moment. The Centre has a Director, a Manager, and approximately eight part-time staff members, and thirty volunteers. The Director, constable Claude Turgeon, is responsible for the daily activities at the Youth Centre, and as head of the OPYC, is the primary representative of the Centre to outside organizations. The Manager's primary role, apart from the Centre's administration, is to develop more consistent programs, and to write up official requests for funding from public and private agencies, both of which have been neglected due to a lack of staff and time. Applying for grants is a lengthy and time consuming activity to which a civilian manager may devote more time and effort. The Director had assumed the role of manager up to the time just prior to when the research period ended, at which time a full-time manager had been hired to overtake the administrative tasks of the Youth Centre. Constable Turgeon is called upon frequently by members of the community and other public and private agencies because of his role as a police officer within the Youth Division of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service.

There are no differences in the manner in which the Director, Manager and part-time staff interact with the youth that attend the Centre. All staff members get equally involved in casual activities with the kids like playing pool, ping-pong, pick up games of basketball or ball hockey, participating in crafts, helping with homework, or talking about pressing issues that may concern the attending youth. They are also equally involved in animating the homework club, coaching the different sports teams, acting as councillors at the weekend outdoor camps. Though the staff members are not involved in direct counselling of the youth, they are often the first contact made by youth towards further help, and thus provide encouragement and support for individual efforts made by youth for personal assistance. Kids that attend the Youth Centre develop friendships with staff members that they may not have with other adults, or other adults outside their family settings. Students with personal problems are not always likely to approach social workers or youth workers located inside the schools, as they are often seen as "part of the system". Staff at the OPYC are often seen as friends and are considered trustworthy by the youth. In fact, some youth, as they get older eventually become staff members at the Youth Centre or work at summer camps hosted or assisted by the OPYC.

Staff meetings are held every one or two weeks to discuss the operations of the Centre, the status of the members attending, the possibility of new activities or programs, and any other topic affecting the Youth Centre such as renovations to the building. Staff will discuss any changes they have noticed in the behaviour of a particular member, and will share any information received about a member. For example, parents may call to

discuss a child's school record, or a youth's experience with alcohol to see how the Youth Centre could help. The issue of new programs often stems from the interests of the youth members. They may have knowledge of a sports tournament the Centre could make up a team for, or they may exert behaviour that suggest the development of a new program. Programs are initiated or abandoned by staff depending on the needs and level of interest displayed by members. The programs are not imposed on individuals, but rather participation is encouraged. The modification of a program is a group decision discussed and taken by staff and does not require a complicated approval process.

The Ottawa Police Youth Centre Board of Trustees is a volunteer board set up by the Director of the OPYC in March of 1994. The Director chose board members based on two criteria: 1) his knowledge of them and their personal and professional activities; and 2) the contribution they may bring to the organization based on their personal or professional background. The Board is made up of fifteen individuals, five of which are members of the Executive.¹³ The Executive includes the following positions: The President, the Executive Vice-President, the Vice-President Legal, the Treasurer, and the Secretary. The Board's mandate is not yet defined by a constitution, but its role can be

¹³Following the research, the OPYC made a rapid modification to the Board of Trustees' structure. It is being transformed into two separate Boards: The Executive Board made up of five individuals, and the Advisory Board made up of ten individuals. Decisions of any type, including those requiring financial resources, require the approval of the Executive Board only. The Advisory Board acts solely in an advisory role. This system was adopted due its ability to respond quickly to the Youth Centre's needs as particular Board members were often absent, the presence of all Board members was difficult to coordinate, and meetings of the Executive are easier and faster to set up than to call upon all members under the old Board system. Some individuals disagree with the new set up, as control of the Youth Centre is not subject to the scrutiny of the variety of individuals which prevailed in the past with the larger Board structure.

defined by three points: 1) it acts as an advisory board to the OPYC; 2) it provides financial and legal management; 3) it provides the Youth Centre with a credible directing body for official requests, and representation. These three points, which shall be examined in more detail, also reflect the main reasons for which the Board was created. First, it acts as an advisory board to the OPYC on all issues, but mainly those of legal and financial nature, including the organization and administration of major fund raising events. Secondly, it provides a control on the ever expanding budget of the OPYC, so as to alleviate the responsibility of financial management and accountability from a sole individual, that person being the Director of the OPYC. Thirdly, the Board is an official body representing the Youth Centre and gives much credibility to the Centre when it makes requests to other organisms and government departments. Many members of the Board are individuals already implicated with non-profit organizations and fund raising. Their personal credibility, and their support for the OPYC by volunteering their time to be a member of the Board, says a lot for the Youth Centre itself.

Fund raising remains a key element of the Board's agenda. In setting up an event, the Board¹⁴ identifies the target population for the fund raising drive. With a relatively clear idea of the event in hand, it then determines what resources, including financial, physical, and human, need to be secured. The Board then sets up an operational plan to assure that all required tasks, from written requests and publicity to the choice of appropriate dinner

¹⁴The term "Board" is used here in a liberal manner. A sub-committee is usually set up to organize the event, but is often primarily made up of members of the Executive, and of willing volunteers from the Board who are available.

menus, are completed within the proper time frame. Main events have included a yearly "Awesome Auction" which raised over \$30,000 in October, 1993 and approximately \$26,000 in 1994. In June 1995, a boxing gala was held which raised \$12,500.¹⁵ Grand events are aimed primarily at corporate donors and traditional supporters of the Centre. The Youth Centre's finances are managed by Board as the yearly budget is too large to be the responsibility of the Director. The yearly budget has approached \$75,000 in 1994. Legally, the OPYC is applying for its status as a non-profit organization, so that it may issue tax receipts to those making donations. It would then be eligible for certain types of grants requiring such a status. The Board also looks into issues such as insurance and liability.

The Board of Trustees has an important role in matters relating to the building itself. The City of Ottawa estimated that in June of 1994 the building required \$363,000 worth of renovations to bring the Fire Hall up to the building code standard, and to extend its life by fifteen years (City of Ottawa, 1994: 5). The Ottawa South Rotary Club became involved by providing their own architectural assessment of the building. The Rotary Club calculated the lowest cost possible for the building renovations and improvements. The Rotary Club then voluntarily offered to coordinate the renovation work. Having members in numerous different trades, the Club was able to assist in providing the lowest estimates involved in the repair work by determining how costs could be reduced in refurbishing the building by relying on the donation of materials, workmanship, and equipment rental from organizations

¹⁵These figures refer to commonly known amounts reported in newspapers, and stated by individuals knowledgeable about the OPYC. They have been verified by consulting the Board of Trustee council meeting minutes.

willing to help, and by proceeding by stages of necessity instead of completing all the work at once.¹⁶

Many members of the Executive agree that there is a need for a basic strategic plan, which would clearly state the direction the OPYC would like to pursue. The lack of a business plan creates a situation in which financial priorities are not clearly established, and though they may not be contradictory, they are not homogeneous. The more formalized business plan would better identify opportunity costs, and the consequences of spending. There is within the Executive, a desire to down size the Board because of the difficulty in encouraging parties to be consistently present, and in encouraging the completion of assigned tasks through the sub-committee system. Many efforts which must be undertaken are limited to individual efforts, and the absence of an individual completing a required task, puts extra pressure on the other members of the Board, and may impede other efforts undertaken simultaneously. The idea of down-sizing the Board has been mentioned, but is not necessarily popular with all members, as it would mean a less diverse group on which to tap resources. In its present form, the Board creates a balance of representation socially, professionally, and idealistically. Although the down sizing of the Board could represent a less varied group of individuals, it would also permit a less bureaucratic means of management, as individuals on the Board would be less specialized in their tasks.

¹⁶Renovations were being undertaken during the process of this research. Some work, like the wiring, was being done to cover the cost of materials only.

b. Activities and programs

Programs and activities are offered as a means of accomplishing the Centre's objectives of establishing positive relationships between area youth and police officers, reducing crime in the area, and developing positive life skills in youth. In attaining these global objectives, the Youth Centre seeks to,

- help youth feel they are a vital part of the community;
 - encourage attitudes of responsibility, co-operation, and belonging;
 - assist the development of productive, contributing citizenship;
 - defer young offenders from the criminal justice system by actively involving individuals and their families in the Youth Centre programs;
 - contribute significantly to community, social and economic support;
- (OPYC, 1994b)

Although many activities arise from the interests of the members, they are undertaken in a manner that encourages the goals listed above. Thus, the goal is attained through an activity, but the activity is the end in itself as the activity is the fulfilment of the primary objective, the improvement of youth-police relations. Programs and activities may take different forms at the Centre, but most are based on sports and recreation. Sportsmanship, fair play, co-operation, team work, and team spirit, are all encouraged in partaking in the different sports programs. Other activities focus more on the development of life skills, responsibility and working skills, or on the assistance of a particular need.

Sports programs, like indoor and outdoor basketball, ball hockey, volleyball, and soft ball, are offered for both males and females and vary depending upon the time of year, interests, and the presence of leagues. Pick up games have always been popular at the

Youth Centre, especially when staff members are involved, but leagues did not begin to gain much support among youth until the second year of operation. During the period following the Youth Centre's opening, youth would play floor hockey quite enthusiastically when the police officers assigned to the Centre were among those playing, but as they retreated from the game, the motivation among the young kids was lost. Having youth sign up for a league was difficult as there was very little commitment on behalf of the kids. Since the Ottawa Police took over full-time operation of the Youth Centre in 1992 and has invested in quality equipment and is more committed in personnel hours, the picture has been very different as the members are quick to sign up to participate in the leagues.

As the sports programs began to grow, the OPYC sought to play against teams from other housing projects, but discovered that there were no teams of its sort to be found. An active effort on the part of the Director of the OPYC to get other areas to participate produced a Ball Hockey League run by the Centre free of charge, with seven teams participating from other parts of the city. Other activities based at the Fire Hall, develop randomly like in-house dart, table tennis, and basketball leagues. While another basketball league has been set up by the Director of the OPYC, with the help of the Youth Centre staff on Friday nights from 21h00 to midnight for boys thirteen to eighteen years of age. Located in another area of Ottawa experiencing problems with youth, but not in the vicinity of the OPYC, the program has been set up in the Britannia Boys and Girls Club after the latter's regular hours, and programming.

The OPYC has gained a reputation among area sports leagues as having well behaved disciplined players.¹⁷ Within the past year the boys basketball team participating in the Youth Centre's Boys and Girls Inter-club Five Team Basketball League not only won, but they were also recognized and congratulated for a season free of swearing penalties. Meanwhile, the girls basketball team, for the second year in a row, won the "Women in Sports" city league championship. In the fall of 1994, the OPYC was able to provide two full teams for a girls volleyball tournament, while some other teams were short on players. The Centre's teams played each other in the final round and placed first and second in the tournament.

Camp Minwassin is the property of the Ottawa Boys and Girls Club, but arrangements have been made to use part of the site without cost from the autumn to spring period. During the summer, youth 8 to 16 years of age may attend either a one or two week session with financial assistance provided by the Youth Centre for its members who are unable to afford the fees which range from fifty to one hundred dollars depending on the length of the session chosen. In the summer of 1994, fifty-three kids from the Centre attended Camp Minwassin for a length of six or twelve days. In total, fifty-eight kids received approximately \$6500 in funding from the Rick Bowness Fund, to attend Camp Minwassin and sport camps.¹⁸ Every second weekend from fall through to spring,

¹⁷One comment made to the researcher was the belief by other teams that the OPYC's sport teams were "stacked" with really good players from other areas of the city.

¹⁸Support for the sports camps was awarded to a total of five people, including 2 girls. They included a football camp, a basketball camp, a soccer camp and a baseball league.

approximately ten to fifteen youth get to go to Camp Minwassin through the Moonlighters Program, which lasts from Saturday morning until Sunday night. The weekend camp is a combination of work and play, which encourages self-esteem and the ethics of responsibility, team work, and trust. The Moonlighters Council is made up of 5 youth and is responsible for the planning of activities during the weekend trips to Camp Minwassin, the purchasing of food and provisions, and for dealing with issues which may arise from camp. Those attending must complete a number of chores like chopping wood, cleaning up the camp area, and repairing and taking care of the equipment. Although there is a certain amount of "free time", work, games and activities fill most of the schedule. Summer activities include sports like basketball and baseball, as well as swimming, canoeing and water skiing. Whereas during the winter, activities include snow shoeing, cross country skiing and teamwork and survival training programs which were being developed. The most popular activity featured at the camp is called the "Rope Course" in which the participants learn a great deal about themselves and the importance of others. Special ropes are set approx 60 feet off the ground, tied from one tree to another. The object is to first climb the tree to the height of the ropes and then to travel across the ropes and to rappel downward. Throughout the whole time, the person climbing wears a climbing harness and is tethered to a buddy on the ground, who controls the amount of slack in the climbing rope that link them. This is to permit the person to climb, but serves as a means to stop the person from falling should that person slip. If someone becomes afraid or unsure during their climb, they may turn back without consequence, and are congratulated on their effort. Though the campers learn self-confidence and self-reliance through the exercise, they also

learn the importance of encouragement, and the need to be supportive in another's accomplishments although that person may not have completed the course. Time is set aside for the campers to discuss the events of the day and to talk about their personal feelings or experience related to what they had done. At camp, such group sessions can be in a number of environments including around the campfire. It is also a moment where issues important to youth may be brought up. In order to encourage participation at the OPYC, any members who would like to take part in the Moonlighters weekend camp program, must attend the Youth Centre on a regular basis.¹⁹

Many programs at the Youth Centre are initiated by the kids themselves, and staff simply turn the idea or action into a more concrete and structured activity. One such example of a formalized program is the homework club and tutorial program. The club meets twice a week, on Wednesday and Sunday. The idea of a tutoring program originated when members began bringing their homework to the Youth Centre, and started requesting help from staff. Tutors were made available to support the homework club, though Youth Council records show that members had voiced their concern that tutors were not being scheduled although they had been assured that there was a list of available candidates. Though there is a documented interest in the tutoring program, no statistics have been kept as to the number of participants, and the consistency of its use by members. Students whose academic achievement may be low or may exhibit academic problems, and who wish

¹⁹There is no set rule on attendance, but the popularity of the Moonlighters program suggests that preference is given to kids who get involved at the Centre, rewarding them for their efforts.

to partake in the sports programs are required to take part in the homework club. This assures that any para-scholar activities undertaken at the Youth Centre do not have a negative effect on the members' academic performance.

The Fire Hall Players are a theatre group made up of youth from the Youth Centre. The drama club presents plays at area schools, to local church groups, and at community events. Their style of street theatre deals with issues that are of concern to youth, especially area youth, like the debate over the fate of the Fire Hall building and how its possible destruction would affect them. It was originally set up with the assistance of the McGregor Easson Lighthouse Program, and was directed by Kris Trotter, the Community Developer and Health Promoter from Carleton Heights Community and Health Services. The club offers an alternative means, compared to the sports programming, of helping develop social skills, self-esteem, as well as creativity, especially for those youth who are intimidated by team sports. The drama club uses Aesop's fables, and has performed a play they produced themselves. The program does lack some support structurally within the Centre as sports programs receive more physical support, and are encouraged more aggressively. Though the Fire Hall Players were still active in March of 1995, their activities have fizzled over the course of the summer, and their status is somewhat unsure.

The Youth Council was set up in the summer of 1994 to come up with new ideas, to voice the wants and needs of the members, to raise money, and for its members to act as ambassadors of the Youth Centre to the community. The Youth Council is made up of

ten youth and is presided over by a staff member, and at times, by the Director. The Director's presence at the meetings, and as the chair, has worried some people as the presence may conflict with, or direct the interests of the Council. The Council has organized touch football and three on three basketball tournaments, dance workshops, and activities like dances. At the dances the council members volunteer to run the services like the main entrance, the box office, and the coat check. At the dances, staff are present to keep an eye on things and to keep everything under control, they are present to assist when needed and are not relied upon to run the event, a task left to the council members and volunteers. The council members are in charge of creating schedules, obtaining necessary items like hangers and tags, publicity, and scouting for a disc jockey. In order to avoid any trouble makers, at the first dance held by the Centre, the Director wore his police uniform, a rarity at the Youth Centre. Subsequently, his presence at the door, with or without his uniform, was sufficient to check for and deter the possibility of alcohol, and knives. Attendance at the dances is primarily encouraged by word of mouth through regular members, but posters and flyers are often made by members of the Youth Council.²⁰ The Council is not given a budget, so any initiative must be presented to the Director for approval and funding. The Youth Council is also involved with the homework club, as one of the Council members is at its head. As morale began to dwindle among those attending the homework club, the Youth Council suggested an additional incentive for members to get and remain involved with the club by rewarding participants with a free movie night.

²⁰Attendance figures for dances are available for only two events. A dance held in October of 1994 attracted 115 youth, whereas one held in March of 1995 attracted 154 youth.

Council members have also acted as Halloween escorts for the younger kids attending the Centre and have also collaborated on the writing of an article about the Youth Centre, its programs, and its achievements, for the local community newspaper called the Hog's Back News.

Saturday morning programs are targeted for younger kids aged five to ten and are animated by staff and the older members from the Centre from 9h00 to 13h00. Though focused mainly on arts and crafts, activities also include games and workshops, like the dance program. In addition to activities at the Youth Centre, a number of special outings are available. Usually held on the weekend, these include trips to the swimming pool, movie theatres and football games for which tickets have been donated. As with the Moonlighters program, participation is reserved for those who attend the Youth Centre regularly, as not to attract kids only for the special events.

The older members of the OPYC have a number of opportunities by which to gain valuable work experience at the Youth Centre.²¹ They may act as volunteers, participate in either the OPYC Youth Council, or the Moonlighters Council which plays an active part in organizing the weekend camp trips during the winter, or they may even become casual or part-time staff members. In the past, members have given workshops, like dance or crafts,

²¹A new member of the newly created Executive Board, a lawyer by the name of Rick Goodman, is examining the possibility of developing a piece work program at the Youth Centre to provide concrete work experience. The rate of pay would be minimal, as pay is earned through the amount of work accomplished. For example, X cents paid for every enveloped stuffed. However, it would provide youth with the opportunity of running their own business.

to the young kids who attend the Saturday Morning programs. Others have been hired to supply services, like security at a John Howard Society fund raising sale, and as councillors to work at local summer camps, like Camp Minwassin. The Youth Centre, independently and with the assistance of other organizations, has had a number of workshops focusing on general life skills, and topics especially important to youth. These workshops have included subjects such as dating, resumé writing and how to apply for a job. The OPYC also offers a scholarship for which an individual in the community who requires financial assistance for post secondary education is eligible. It was set up with the financial assistance of two Board members and a corporate sponsor, Pepsi-Cola, who subsequently withdrew from the program. The scholarship however lacks formal rules for its eligibility and application and does not appear to have any long term funding. At the present time, the fund has been awarded to a University of Ottawa Engineering student who would not have the means to attend if it were not for the scholarship. There is debate on the length of time for which the funding would be provided. It does however provide opportunities, that would not be available for area youth without the presence of the OPYC.

A current issue which arose from the Youth Centre's means of operating is the question of fees. Some people, including a number of Board members, believe that youth should pay a small fee to help cover the cost of particular activities, like attending the wave pool. This, it is suggested, would reinforce the child's understanding of the value of money, and to respect the fact that most things in life carry cost. It is proposed that the principle actually outweighs the price, and only a token amount from twenty five cents to a few

dollars would be collected. It is argued that if many of the kids can afford the cost of a video game or a fifty cent can of pop, then they can take a more active role in taking responsibility for the special programming. The issue of fees is also related to the concern about over-rewarding youth, especially the younger kids. Excessive rewards may give the wrong message as they encourage improper work ethics. The notion that rewards must be earned and deserved is important to instill in youth who may be prone to theft and vandalism, as it encourages a greater show of respect for the property and earnings of others.

c. Formal and informal links with the community

The OPYC has established links with other organizations and individuals. Partnerships may be formal or informal, continuous or intermittent in nature. The end of a collaboration does not always indicate that the parties no longer want to work together, but rather, it can indicate that the objective of the partnership has been attained, or that the link was no longer possible. Many partnerships develop out of the staff's personal knowledge of other individuals, whether they be friends, past co-workers, or counterparts within other organizations. The common agendas and similar personalities of both parties help create collaborations between the Youth Centre and others in the social services field.

Two similar examples which fall between community links and programs, are the deferment program and the adult volunteer program. The deferment program, an alternative measures program as prescribed by the Young Offender's Act, is available for area youth, twelve to seventeen years of age, who have committed and who have taken responsibility for certain types of crimes. Youth are required to do remedial work in the community by getting involved with the Youth Centre, in an effort to avoid being charged with the crime, and initiated into the criminal justice system. The OPYC's, "staff can then monitor these individuals' free time, including their situation at home and at school." (OPYC, 1994a: 4) The adult volunteer program on the other hand, is a post-charge program for adults who have been charged with minor offenses and are required by the courts to perform community service work. It is estimated that at any point in time, the Youth Centre has two or three youth in the deferment program, and approximately ten adults performing community service work. In both instances, the case is subject to approval by the Director of the Youth Centre.

The OPYC has also established links with certain schools in its area. Although schools are generally assigned a School Liaison Officer (SLO), some schools make use of Constable Turgeon's close proximity to them when their SLO is not available. Regular contact however, has been made by Constable Turgeon with three area schools including one elementary school and two high schools. This contact is primarily with the school's Special Support Units which are dedicated, "to address the needs of behaviorally exceptional students, to help stabilize behaviour, and to maintain or facilitate full or partial integration

into the main stream." (Waterhouse, 1995: 1) Youth enrolled in the SSU programs of these three area schools are often encouraged to participate in the OPYC activities.

Counselling for area youth who attend the Youth Centre, is provided by counsellors based either with the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, the Youth Services Bureau, or with a community based organization such as the Carleton Heights Community and Health Services. The involvement of the counsellor with the Centre arises in one of two ways. Either the counsellor may rely on the Centre for its programs or facilities, or the youth or family may initially discuss the problem with a staff member, and if required, a suggestion is made about speaking to someone more qualified or specialized in counselling. A meeting is set up between the individual, if he or she is willing, the staff member and the counsellor. so that they may meet on ground and terms which are acceptable and familiar to the individual. If counselling continues beyond the initial stages of the first meeting, and the counsellor has gained the trust of the individual, there is no longer a need for the staff member to be present.

Links have been established by the Youth Centre with organizations more similar to itself like the Boys and Girls Club, as described and explained earlier, or with groups which get involved in similar activities. Women in Sport is an organization located in Ottawa which promotes team league sports for women. Though no formal link is established with the organization, it is a source of sports activities for women which cannot be overlooked as they are extremely well organized. The youth Centre has a growing

female participation rate²², which will require an increased attention and organization. Women in sport provides a viable alternative to trying to organize a league from scratch.

Many of the more formal links originate in the organization of fund raising activities, which companies provide sponsorship for as the Youth Centre is perceived as a positive organization to support, which also acquires a respectable amount of media exposure. The most prevalent links are with other social service agencies which make dual use of the Centre's programs, share information and complement each other's efforts.

²²As will be demonstrated with attendance figures listed further in the thesis.

Chapter 4

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE RECORDS, PROGRAMS, AND PROPOSED MEASURABLE RESULTS

Although the OPYC has not undergone any formal evaluation, it can be affirmed, after having spoken with those involved with the Youth Centre, that its success has been defined by its proponents using four indicators based on the notion that the Youth Centre has fulfilled its primary objective of improving police-youth relations through the provision of diversionary activities for youth. The four defining points are: 1) The number of youth that have held membership since the OPYC's conception; 2) The Youth Centre's attendance figures; 3) The number and variety of programs that have been offered, as well as the levels of participation to those activities; and 4) The proposed measurable results which, it has been suggested, statistically show a reduction of offenses within the area of the Youth Centre. These points have been identified by the researcher as indicators and not as criteria for success, because they were not established by the organization, or any other body examining the OPYC, as being the criteria by which the Youth Centre's success would be measured. Rather, these points were adopted subsequently, after their identification, as measures of success. Of these four indicators, the first two will be examined jointly, in an effort to quantify the Youth Centre's growth, and to qualify the attendance demographically. The third point relating to the number and variety of programs, has been examined in the

previous chapter and its relative participation is reflected in the attendance figures. The fourth point will be examined critically, as there is a hint of scepticism regarding the validity of the data on the part of a number of individuals concerned with the Youth Centre.

a. Membership and attendance figures

Youth who attend the Centre are asked to complete a membership form, documenting pertinent personal information about the new member, that is kept on file at the Centre.²³ Each time a member arrives, the youth gives his or her membership number to a staff member who notes it, based on gender and age category, on an attendance sheet.²⁴ At the end of each month, a tally of attendance is written up, including the number of adults and visitors to the Centre. Unless otherwise indicated, the following tables do not include adults and visitors to the Youth Centre, attendance to the Saturday morning programs, or to special events like dances, or fund raising activities.

Attendance at the Youth Centre has been increasing since its opening. Though attendance figures are not available prior to 1992, a sporadic view of the number of memberships serves as an indicator for the Centre's popularity among area youth. The total number of memberships distributed since the Youth Centre's conception, up to May 1995

²³See appendi:: 3.

²⁴See appendi:: 4.

was 600. Though it is difficult to determine how many of these memberships are still active, the number is relevant, especially when compared with membership numbers at particular points in time. For example, over a 19 month period, from the Youth Centre's opening in May of 1990 to December of 1992, the point at which the OPYC was taken over by the Ottawa Police on a full-time basis, the Centre had acquired a total of 90 members. In the subsequent 19 month period, from December 1992, to July 1994, the total membership had risen to 450. Interestingly, data and summary statistics provided by OPYC archives show that in December 1993, while membership was numbered at 312, approximately 41% of members were from the Debra-Dynes area. Of those 312 members, 294 of them had visited the Youth Centre between June 2 and November 30, 1993, with only 34 members having visited just once. This data, though somewhat dated, combined with the present rate at which new memberships are being created shows not only a continued interest, but also an increasing interest in the Centre by youth. This popularity is mirrored by the rise in attendance figures, as depicted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Ottawa Police Youth Centre Monthly Attendance Figures of Members

MONTH	1993	1994	1995
January	475	894	1583
February	406	996	1490
March	794	1598	1822
April	778	1535	1501
May	986	1393	1766
June	887	1762	not available
July	1218	1650	not available
August	1745	1749	not available
September	1057	1571	---
October	1128	1471	---
November	1453	1858	---
December	978	1586	---
TOTAL	11905	18063	---

(Source: Data from monthly attendance records)

The above table shows an increase in attendance of 52% between 1993 and 1994. If a comparison is made of the attendance records of members over the first 5 months of 1993, 1994, and 1995, a similar increase of 54% is observed between 1993 and 1994, and 27% between 1994 and 1995.²⁵ Archival data from the OPYC shows that on a count of 5969 visits which occurred between June and November 1993, 51% were from members residing in the Debra-Dynes area.

²⁵At the time of the research, attendance records were available for only the first five months of the year of 1995.

Attendance figures indicate support for the Youth Centre, but a more in depth examination of the nature of the attendance figures reveals the following points related to gender. First, table 4.2 shows that the increase in attendance in number of persons, grew more among females than among males. Female attendance increased by 3443, whereas male attendance grew by 2715. Though these numbers are relatively close, these differences relate to an increase of 30% in male attendance and an increase of 124% in female attendance between 1993 and 1994. This means that female attendance has more than doubled in twelve months. Second, Table 4.2 shows that the proportion of females attending the OPYC has increased from 23% in 1993, to 34% in 1994.

Table 4.2

Ottawa Police Youth Centre Yearly Attendance Figures of Members by Gender

GENDER	1993	1994
Male	9126	11841
Female	2779	6222
Total	11905	18063

(Source: Data from monthly attendance records)

Thus, females are making up a growing portion of those attending the Youth Centre, and this trend continues over all age groups, as will be demonstrated in Table 4.4. Table 4.3 illustrates that although there is a very large increase in attendance among all age groups, ranging from an increase of 43% to 55%, their respective ratio has remained quite consistent when examined notwithstanding gender.

Table 4.3

Ottawa Police Youth Centre Yearly Attendance Figures of Members by Age Group

AGE GROUP	1993	1994
Junior	1277	1877
Intermediate	2768	3965
Senior	7860	12221
Total	11905	18063

(Source: Data from monthly attendance records)

However, when one looks at the combination of gender and age group, as in Table 4.4, we conclude that among those attending, female representation is increasing in all age groups, whereas male representation is decreasing. Senior girls rose from 14% to 22% of attending members compared to senior boys who fell from 52% to 45% of overall representation in attendance. Though females are still outnumbered by almost two to one by males, the figures show an encouraging trend considering that, with the exception of the Women in Sport leagues, the programs at the Youth Centre are not specifically geared or designed to attract young females.

Table 4.4

**Ottawa Police Youth Centre Yearly Attendance Figures of Members
by Gender and Age Group**

GENDER & AGE GROUP	1993	1994
Junior boys	1022	1202
Intermediate boys	1914	2466
Senior boys	6190	8173
Junior girls	255	675
Intermediate girls	854	1499
Senior girls	1670	4048
TOTAL	11905	18063

(Source: Data from monthly attendance records)

The overall increase in membership and in attendance figures, as well as the rise in female representation are positive conclusions which reinforce the argument that the Centre is experiencing some success at attracting area youth.

b. Proposed measurable results

Statistics have been provided by the OPYC, originating from the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, on the reduction of crime rates in the area. Though these figures are used by the Police Service to suggest that the OPYC has had a strong effect on the community and has created lower rates of crime in the areas adjacent to the Centre, the use

of such statistics are highly controversial. Generally, penal statistics are social indicators of contact with the justice system, and indicators of how the system has dealt with particular individuals, but they are not valid indicators of criminal behavior. Though the following statistics do not establish an association or a causal relationship between the activities of the OPYC and lower rates of crime, they are presented here as an illustration of how the OPYC is seen, by the Police Service and the public, to have had a valid effect on the surrounding community. Examples of the results proposed by the Ottawa Police Youth Centre's "Facts and Measurable Results" sheet (1995) include the following statistics depicting the period from 1992 to 1994:

A 54% increase in auto thefts in the City of Ottawa, compared to a 12% decrease in the area of the OPYC.

A 3.2% increase in mischief charges (property damage) in the City of Ottawa, compared to a 12% decrease in that area of the OPYC.

It should be noted that at the same time that the Youth Centre was initiated, a number of other factors were also at play such as an increase in police activity, a more aggressive approach towards problem tenants by the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Housing Authority, and the possible exodus of the most influential individuals involved in drug dealing.

Whether or not the OPYC has had a measurable effect on the behaviour of area youth has not been empirically evaluated. There is however a public perception, reflected by area shop keepers and parents, that there is less crime in the area, and that this is directly attributable to the presence of the Youth Centre. There have been a number of comments on the observed changes on the behaviour of certain "high risk" individuals, due mainly to

their active participation in OPYC activities, and involvement with the Centre's staff. An article, written by a parent of children who attend the OPYC, dated 1993 in the community newspaper, the Hogs Back News, and entitled "Our Own Kids in the Hall" reads.

The [media] stories circulating then [a few years ago] were about how dangerous our streets were, the drugs, the high crime rate and violence. Kids aren't selling drugs on the corner anymore. They're not hanging around in gangs looking for somewhere to go and something to do out of boredom. There have been no shootings or stabbing lately.

Many people, including parents and youth workers, notice differences in particular problem or high-risk youth of the area. A number of adults from the area attest to the drastic "turn around" taken by certain kids. Comments which are reflected and reinforced by teachers in the schools' special support units, and vice-principals who are aware of certain students' histories, and their involvement at the OPYC.

CONCLUSION

It now becomes possible to make certain conclusions about the Ottawa Police Youth Centre, focusing primarily on the Youth Centre's structure, and its characterizing traits. After describing the status of the OPYC's facilities, its actors, and its operations, we may now refer back to both Table 1.1, Small Groups and Formal Organizations: A Comparison,²⁶ and Table 1.2, Primary Groups and Secondary Groups: A Summary,²⁷ to help determine the nature of the means by which the organization functions. It will also be determined whether the OPYC shares the five main themes that characterize other successful youth centres and programs, as identified in the first chapter of this document. Finally, a brief overview of the research will highlight certain conclusions which may be stated about the Youth Centre, and will identify particular questions this thesis raises as well as the specific areas which require further study and research. It will also identify the contributions the thesis itself brings to the field of sociology.

Referring to Table 1.1, conclusions may be made by examining the structure of the OPYC in reference to the seven categories used to compare the small group to the formal organization. The order of the categories has been respected: activities, hierarchy, norms, criteria for membership, relationships, communications, and focus. Most categories are

²⁶Please see page 9.

²⁷Please see page 10.

examined in two parts, as both staff and the youth members are considered part of the organization when comparing the Youth Centre to the Table. Though the nature of the relationship differs for both groups, they are equally important to the Youth Centre and are both integral to its operation.

Generally, all staff partake in the same activities when dealing with the youth, such as acting as facilitators, coaching or assisting the sports teams, or accompanying and driving members to activities. Though the Director and Manager both have more specific, and a broader range of tasks, requiring certain abilities or knowledge which other staff members do not have, they partake in all of the same activities which the others are involved in, and complete the same type of tasks. Thus, the different job functions are familiar and not highly specialized, unless they refer to an individual's authority like the Director's position as a police constable. A situation that may require the assistance of an individual with a specialized training, like that of a professional councillor, would lead to that help being acquired from outside the Youth Centre. Tasks which are to be performed are undertaken by the person available and most apt to complete them, though at times, an individual may be chosen because of that person's past experience. The youth attending the Centre partake in many of the same activities, as their participation in one program or another, if any, is of personal choice.²⁸ Activities and programs are generally accessible to all members with certain limitations based on age and gender, as in the case of specific sports leagues. Staff

²⁸With the possible exception of the charge deferral program to which participation is not mandatory, but is rather an option for an eligible candidate. Once the individual is involved, that person's commitment is binding.

and youth get involved together in tournaments, pick-up games, and special projects. It can therefore be said that though some functions within the Youth Centre are specialized, most tasks can be shared by all. There does not appear to be any great feelings of possessiveness on the part of staff for a particular task. Cooperation is strongly encouraged by staff at all times, and can be observed among both staff and youth members, and between both groups as well.

The hierarchy within the structure of the OPYC takes different forms. There is a hierarchy of offices best understood as a hierarchy of authority and responsibility which begins with the position of Director, and continues in descending order with the positions of Manager, staff and volunteers. Embedded in the different levels of authority are different functions,²⁹ but the OPYC does not have clearly defined offices other than the position of manager for which there is a detailed job description. Youth can, and do, interact, consult, talk, and play with any staff member including the Director and Manager without having to go through another individual. All staff are accessible to the youth. Thus, though hierarchy exists within the organization, it does not materialize itself in a formal nature in the scope of staff interacting with the youth unless an issue requires the input of someone in an official capacity. An example of this would be the need for constable Turgeon to act in his capacity of police officer to assist in a situation. Hierarchy, or rather a dichotomy of authority, can be observed between the position of Director and staff, as the Director has

²⁹Functions or responsibilities are considered here as a function of authority, and not the other way around, because it is the level of authority which permits the Director and Manager to fulfil certain functions and not the function which gives authority.

the added responsibility being accountable for the actions of staff and the activities of the Youth Centre.

The application of rules and norms at the Youth Centre is done primarily in an informal manner. Rules, as set out by staff during a member's first visit, are enforced by the adult peers present at the Centre, but especially by the youth themselves. The responsibility of assuring that everyone adheres to the rules is shared by all who are present at the Centre, and by all who represent the OPYC when special activities or competitions are held elsewhere. This encourages positive, in group, peer models for other youth of similar and younger ages in attendance and helps encourage self-esteem and pride. The Youth Centre has acquired a local reputation for its members' good manners, for which the members are quite proud. There does not exist a policy, or any specifications, regarding the staff's behaviour, their interaction with the kids, or a formal reporting schedule of their observations. Although many comments, of both a positive and negative nature, occur during staff meetings and consultations, to the knowledge of the researcher, they are not documented.

For the purpose of comparison between small groups and formal organizations, membership can be interpreted either relating to the staff or the youth who attend the Centre. Criteria differs for both groups. The status of employment requires by definition certain abilities and particular qualifications, such as holding a valid first aid certificate, but a technical competence or specialization is not a pre-requisite for employment. The ability

and competency to interact and work with youth in a positive and effective manner is the most important qualification of concern to the Director. With regards to the youth, membership to the Youth Centre is based on their desire to participate in programs and activities. It is open to all, and dependant only upon age, the acceptance of the informal rules, and the adherence to them.

Determining the main type of relationship which exists within the context of the Youth Centre requires the use of Table 1.2 which defines the differences between primary and secondary groups. Staff at the Youth Centre, by definition, have goal oriented relationships with the client population attending the Centre. However, the means by which the goal is attained is through the creation of personal friendship links with the attending youth. The relationship, it could then be argued, is both goal oriented and person oriented. However, because the relationships are a function of the staff's role, the ensuing relationship is primarily goal oriented. Even if the relationships are not goal oriented in nature, but are affectionate to any degree, the purpose of the relationships is originally, and continues to be a result of the Youth Centre's objectives. Though the majority of relationships are goal oriented, it is important to acknowledge that numerous observations were made on the part of the researcher of the staff's personal interest, and concern, about particular kids' well being. The duration of the relationship varies from short to long depending on the length of attendance on the part of the youth, and the staff's length of employment. Over time, the breadth of the relationship may evolve from very few activities to a much broader spectrum within and beyond the context of the Youth Centre. A number of instances have been made

known to the researcher, in which staff have offered support to particular youth members who attend the Centre, which stretches beyond the scope of tasks related to programs based and offered at the Youth Centre. This transition is reflected in a change in the subjective perception of the relationship as the relationship goes from a goal oriented means, to an end in itself. An examination of particular events suggests that in general, actions taken to assist an individual are taken not because of a "personal" relationship between the staff member and the individual, but because of the particular situation. The events can therefore be identified as the primary motivating factor. Though by definition the relationships would be categorized as secondary, certain youth show greater affinity towards some staff than others. This suggests a more personal quality to the relationship to the casual observer. It has been suggested that such relationships may be a function of a high rate of single parent families in the community, and a lack of highly visible positive adult peers in the area. It can therefore be argued that the perceived nature of the relationship may be different³⁰ between actors.

Communication occurs in three forms within the Youth Centre. Between staff, between youth members, and staff-youth interaction. In all three instances, the interaction appears to be informal and in person. It is when the OPYC communicates with outside organizations that its communication takes a more formal shape. Even in those instances, there is no set manner in which information is obtained or transmitted. Organizations or

³⁰Staff, in such a situation, are usually aware of the quality of the relationship and the perception the child or youth has of it and has of them. Though the importance of the relationship may be mutual, the youth may perceive the relationship as primary and personal.

individuals like school special support units, and counsellors are called upon on a case to case basis, and each interaction is structured depending on the particular needs of the youth in question, or of the Youth Centre. Generally, very little communication within the Youth Centre is recorded except for when it falls within the parameters of an official police duty, an official event or meeting.

The Youth Centre's focus and the group's focus, referring to the staff and youth members, are somewhat different. The Centre has a set of objectives, previously stated,³¹ that were established at its outset but which have never been officially articulated. Staff's focus, however, is oriented towards establishing a rapport with the youth as their actions deal mainly with the individuals and the activities and programs they animate. The Centre's focus is goal oriented, but achieves this through efforts which are oriented towards individual people. Thus the Youth Centre's focus is to attain its goal and objectives, by means of its staff establishing a personal rapport with the youth.

To qualify the Youth Centre's organizational structure is a difficult task, because it shares qualifiers with both the small group and the formal organization. It is important to understand that although it retains a certain hierarchy, has both primary and secondary relationships, and that it has both a personal and goal oriented focus, it emphasizes its personal approach to dealing with youth and youth issues which a highly structured organization could not provide. If it can be concluded that the OPYC has a small group

³¹Please see page 29.

approach to its organization, it is with a certain amount of reservation as the Youth Centre requires more and more specialized staff and support with its rate of growth and as tasks become too large to be shared by all personnel. The creation of the Board of Trustees, and the hiring of a full-time manager are examples of this trend.

The Youth Centre's organizational structure was not conceptualized prior to its creation. It was originally set-up on a trial basis, but as it grew and gained local popularity with the community, it developed structurally. This is an ongoing developmental process, originally based on trial and error, and is not as yet complete. I would also argue that it will change greatly in the near future, as those who are invested in youth issues see the Centre as a means of providing particular services. How to manage the Centre's activities and its involvement in larger structured programs possibly at the provincial or national level, such as deterrence or remedial programs, will be major issues which may change the Centre's shape, and lead to the establishment of new goals.

The five common themes characterizing successful youth programs, as described in the first chapter,³² serve as a comparison by which to determine whether or not the OPYC has developed similar elements or qualifiers. Briefly, those themes include the importance of relationships, the presence of positive role models, the opportunity for youth to develop social training skills, and flexibility which permits a program to respond to individual needs.

³²Please see page 16.

A key asset of the Youth Centre is its present choice of staff members. These people are outgoing individuals who are eager to get involved and are self-motivated. Their interest in the kids, as well as the programs, is clear to the youth members attending the Centre. The fact that the youth speak quite often of past events related to the Centre and its staff, shows a deep rooted interest in the OPYC. The positive comments, and the pride demonstrated by the youth, parents, staff, and supporters, shows that the sum of relationships existing between staff and members, has developed into a larger relationship between the Youth Centre and the community. Youth have the opportunity to experience a variety of emotions through their participation at the Youth Centre and by their interaction with staff. Relationships grow out of the simple contact between youth and staff over time. The issue of types of relationships is secondary to the intensity of them, and though they may be goal oriented, the relationships may still be personal because the goal of the contact and exchange is the quality of the relationship. Since relations between staff and youth are viewed as a primary goal, the quality of the rapport is a primary concern.

Role models are abundant at the Youth Centre, as they include older youth members who have gained popularity at the Centre, as well as staff and other adults. Older kids, through their success in different sports programs and tournaments, have exemplified cooperation, teamwork, and involvement, to the younger kids. Their part as role models is very important as they lead by example. Parents, though not a large number of them in comparison to the level of membership, have provided support for the OPYC by getting

involved at different levels³³, and by encouraging the programs and events by their attendance. The kids learn a great deal from staff by simply participating in activities with them. A number of high profile peers have also been orchestrated to be present on special occasions like the Open House. These have included National Hockey League Star Alexi Yashin, and the Head Coach of the Ottawa Senators, Rick Bowness. The latter has played an active role in fund raising for children's charities, and exemplifies the importance of establishing direct links with both an active and popular member of the community. With a very hard line on the reduction of crime in the Debra-Dynes community in 1990, the substitution of negative role models by positive ones, through the mere presence of the OPYC, and its creation of local unstructured activities was very timely.

The notion of a community approach is clearly exemplified through the creation of the OPYC, as it originally targeted a particular community, and could only accomplish this with their help. Support in the form of resources was community based as youth workers and professionals who have worked with area youth began working with the Youth Centre. By dealing with the issues which were community based, the members of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service involved in creating the Youth Centre retained an open mind regarding the original establishment and organization of the OPYC. Because the establishment of a youth centre by a police department was considered to be a first of its kind, the original ideas were discussed with all the parties which the project would concern,

³³Including parents' participation in the Board of Trustees, writing for the Hoq's Back News, and showing support for the Centre, especially when it was threatened being closed by the Ottawa City Council.

especially the members of the community. As community members became involved in the creation of the Centre, it was able to respond to the community's needs. This process was strengthened when the status of the Youth Centre was put in question by the Ottawa City Council. The OPYC, though originally set up as a diversionary program for youth, has created a trickle down effect that has strengthened the community.

Social skills training is a very important factor of the Youth Centre's activities, but it does not necessarily target all types of youth. Based on sports and recreation, the Youth Centre, encourages skills and behaviour which may not be accessible to an individual who has a less outgoing personality. The Youth Centre does provide youth with means by which to acquire important social skills, and encourages certain work ethics. The examples of the homework club, and the organized sports leagues, are just a few means of encouraging positive life skills. More specific programs, like the Moonlighters program and the work programs are popular with the older youth, though the work assignments, to the knowledge of the researcher, have only been security tasks, which may not appeal to the female members. At the time of the research, some programs, like the theatre group, and the youth council, appeared to lack the consistent support needed for them to function properly, in their capacity to foster and encourage strong social and work skills.

The flexibility of staff to adapt to the different interests of the group is important in retaining the attention and support of the local youth. If the target population does not attend the Youth Centre, it is impossible to have a positive effect on them. Flexibility is

also an indication of the staff's dedication and interest. The dedication is not solely to the program or activity, but to the youth themselves. Though no specific data is provided about the length of employment of the part-time staff, some have been present at, or have been in contact with the Youth Centre for three to five years. Older members, have become on occasion part-time staff members for varying periods of time, illustrating a strong interest in the Youth Centre, its activities, programs, and fellow members. Dedication is also illustrated by testimonials of observers having witnessed staff putting in extra efforts which were beyond the expectation of their positions, such as remaining present on special occasions even after their scheduled work shifts were complete, and providing services to area youth in need.

Though the OPYC may share these characterizing themes with other successful youth programs and centres, it cannot declare itself successful based on these assumptions. Each common element deserves a certain amount of study which goes beyond the purview of this thesis. It can be acknowledged that it does share similar characteristics with other successful programs, but one must establish the strength or intensity by which these themes exemplify themselves. For example, a comprehensive evaluation should be undertaken of the opportunities by which social training skills are developed, such as the theatre group or the volunteer program. Are the objectives defined and reviewed in the creation and management of the programs? What skills are being enhanced, and how is this being accomplished? Such an evaluation would help identify the positive and negative elements of particular programs, which could then be applied, or avoided, in others. The Youth

Centre's relatively small organization permits a personal approach consistent with the small group and successful programs. As youth have a desire to attend the OPYC and interact with those present, including staff, the Youth Centre and its staff assume a relationship on both a functional and personal level which strengthens the relations they have with youth and the relations that exist among youth, all while providing youth with a greater and more meaningful sense of community.

It has been demonstrated that the OPYC has a dynamic structure which shares the traits of both the small group and the formal organization. Consequently, there is evidence of tension within the organization as its form adopts a more formalized structure while its operations remain based on an informal, small group structure. Though many individuals involved with its organization and its functioning adhere to the principle of direct management, and aspire to retain the personal and small group approach that the Youth Centre has developed, there is a constant need for change within the organization as issues, needs, and resources change. The establishment of the Board of Trustees, the desire to modify the Board, and the hiring of a full-time manager, are but a few examples of the OPYC's response to answering the functional needs of the Youth Centre. The issue which appears most pressing for the organizers, is how to avoid the problems of bureaucracy in adopting a more formal organization. The fear of bureaucracy among some individuals, originates with the idea that a large administration would make the Youth Centre slower and much less flexible to respond to the needs and ideas of attending youth. The issue of empowerment, though never stipulated verbally, appears to be at the root of the issue. The

youth are encouraged to contribute their ideas and initiatives to the Youth Centre, and to take an active role in the development, and organization of activities. The programs, it is believed, are for the youth and therefore should also be maintained in part by them. This logic encourages certain social and work skills, while teaching the ethic of responsibility. It is believed that by adopting a larger, more administrative structure, this form of empowerment of youth, which reinforces a sense of community ownership and pride, would be lost.

The OPYC's reflection of the characterizing traits of successful youth programs is encouraging, and may serve as an indicator of the Youth Centre's future potential. However, though the Youth Centre may generally adhere to the characteristics, it does so without identifying them or similar traits, as goals of the operation. They could be considered, on the other hand, as inherent goals, for the organizers stipulate the need for common sense approaches to programming, which recall the essence of these successful characteristics. One issue that this research raises is the need to better examine the possible consequences of the traits that do appear to be present within the Youth Centre. For example, do the Youth Centre's initiatives which reflect the positive approaches defined earlier, raise other problems? An example of this is a program or activity which focuses on the development of life skills, or which promotes social skills training, while inadvertently encouraging gender bias in programming through exclusion. Are programs set up to be accessible and relevant to both sexes and all personality types? Are alternatives examined, discussed or encouraged? What are the consequences of the Youth Centre's

approach, and are issues properly dealt with in an objective manner? These questions have been identified within the research, but are specific to social problems which are beyond the scope of this study.

The measures of success used to describe the Youth Centre are generally good indicators that the overall goals are being attained. The aspiration to help even more youth is a positive endeavour, especially with the idea of expanding the program in some manner to other geographical areas within the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.³⁴ This approach focuses primarily on the quantity of youth reached, and does not look objectively at the qualitative aspect of the programming. The issues of who is being reached, how they are being reached, and the effect of the programs has not been clearly established, and should serve as an indicator for future endeavour.

The proper definition of goals, and the identification of objectives to attain them, is essential in determining whether or not the operations of the OPYC are efficiently accomplishing what it originally set out to do. The goals must be clearly articulated in order to monitor whether or not the means to attain particular objectives become ends in themselves, and therefore deter from the mandate. Organizers are clearly afraid of the effects of growth as they are unsure of what the consequences of a larger, or more formal organization, may represent for daily operations. The objective is to avoid creating a Centre plagued by "red tape", which lacks both the ability to respond to particular needs and

³⁴Like the idea to duplicate the OPYC in other areas of the city, and the example of the Midnight Basket-Ball League in the Britannia area.

contexts, and which loses its originality and creativity. These fears represent an active desire to avoid bureaucratic ritualism. In order to avoid the organization's preoccupation with regulations and procedures which become ends in themselves, and thus avoid Merton's notion of goal displacement, the Youth Centre must identify the organization's goals, and the means by which to attain them.

The Youth Centre has received a lot of public attention since the Ottawa Police have taken over its full-time operation in 1992.³⁵ Its popularity among area youth, is echoed by public interest, and interest on the part of professionals from across Canada and the United States working with youth. With the increasing demand for sound knowledge about the Ottawa Police Youth Centre, it is imperative that valid and reliable data be obtained on the impact the Youth Centre has had on area youth, and on the community as a whole. I would argue that this future research can be best undertaken, in part, by the field of social-psychology, as it will be imperative that behavioral change in youth be assessed and recorded. Secondly, the field of criminology may want to examine the role the Youth Centre plays within the new working structure of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service. Does the specific involvement of the police have a substantial impact on attending youth? Does police involvement at the community level in problem areas where youth are at high risk of getting involved in illegal activities, help deter the growth of crime or does it simply displace the target population? Thirdly, research in the field of social work could emphasize the study of the Youth Centre's ability to identify the need for, and to assist in

³⁵Public interest is gauged by newspaper and television media coverage of the Youth Centre, as well as by the large number and value of donations.

the provision of effective social assistance. Though these research ideas are relevant and specific to the Youth Centre, more general research is clearly required as well. A more comprehensive typology of youth programs, and a clear description of practical program evaluation methods which could apply to different initiatives would be of practical use for youth workers and programmers.

This research makes a number of contributions to the field of sociology. First it illustrates the practical application of sociological theory as a means of critically examining the real working world. Sociological theory is often borrowed upon by different specialized fields, yet social forces and social action remain in the realm of sociology and are best understood when examined in relation to the social institutions found within actual settings. This research, an example of micro-sociology, is of importance for what it may suggest to macro-sociologists following the issues of youth, social-psychology, and deviance. This thesis also identifies a phenomenon that is rare among law enforcement organizations adopting the community approach to policing. This phenomenon is the careful attempt by police forces to establish and base an outreach, or a service program, specifically in problem areas, versus the popular approach of establishing police services centres in shopping malls and schools located in middle class areas. The research also illustrates the relative importance between classic theorists and contemporary situations, as Merton's theory of goal displacement serves as a means to identify problems which may plague not only formal organizations or bureaucracies, but also those that function in a less formal manner. Thus, the identification of social forces at work within an organization help us understand how

it functions. It also permits those involved in the organization to acknowledge how the organizational structure affects the attainment of established goals and the changes needed to address inherent social problems, such as gender bias.

The theoretical framework has examined the literature pertaining to youth centres and programs, and provides a clear overview of the problems related to the definition of successful programs while synthesizing the characterizing elements raised by a number of authors. This research has provided a better understanding of the Ottawa Police Youth Centre, and the means by which it functions. The description of the Youth Centre's history, its organization, its community links, and its own measures of success, can serve as a basis for further research and give some insight into the establishment of similar projects in other communities.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of Area Surrounding the Ottawa Police Youth Centre

Appendix 2: Letter of Approval to Acquire Information by Constable Claude Turgeon

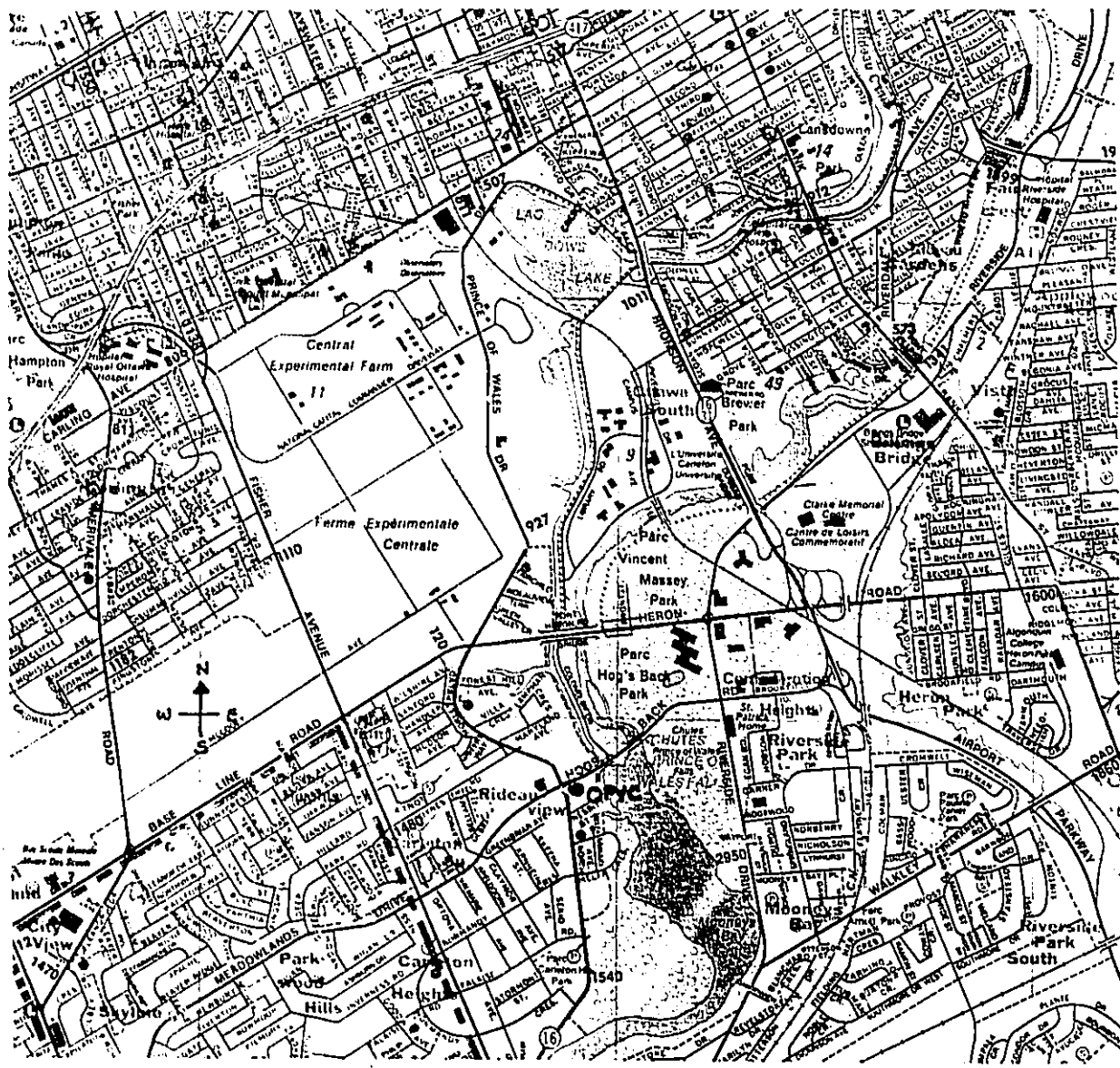
Appendix 3: Example of the Membership Form

Appendix 4: Example of the Daily Attendance Record

Map of Area Surrounding the Ottawa Police Youth Centre

Scale: 1:36000

0 1 Kilometre



Source: Rand McNally, Ottawa/Hull (Ontario/Québec) City Map. Markham: Allmaps Canada Limited.



Constable Claude Turgeon (pager) 787-8051

Ottawa Police Youth Centre
1463 Prince of Wales Drive
727-5398

c/o 474 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 2J6

013236-0311 Fax: 013235-4668

Monday May 29, 1995

To Whom It May Concern,

Jean-François Bussières is completing an M.A. (Sociology) at the University of Ottawa. His thesis is a case study of the Ottawa Police Youth Centre (OPYC), focusing on its structure and organization, its goals, and its links with the community.

Please be kind enough to provide him with any information pertaining to your knowledge, contact, or participation with the OPYC and its staff.

Sincerely,

Constable Claude Turgeon
Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service

OTTAWA POLICE YOUTH CENTRE

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _____

Members name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Residence Telephone: _____ Postal Code: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

Date of Birth: Day: _____ Month: _____ Year: _____ Age: _____

Health Card #: _____

With whom do you reside: _____

Father's name: _____ Tel #: _____

Mother's name: _____ Tel #: _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY PLEASE CONTACT:

Name: _____ Tel #: _____

The centre is a non-profit youth serving organisation dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all youth from 6 to 19 years of age, with a special concern for the disadvantaged. We provide a centre for youth to call their own; an exciting and safe environment in which they can participate at their own level. Membership in the centre is free, although donations are welcome.

Although all activities in the centre are well supervised, parents and guardians must be aware that members are free to come and go from the centres they please.

For further information please contact: Constable Claude Turgeon at the youth centre, 727-5398.

OTTAWA POLICE YOUTH CENTRE
DAILY ATTENDANCE

DATE: _____

BOYS

Junior	Intermediate	Senior	Visitors	Adults

GIRLS

Junior	Intermediate	Senior	Visitors	Adults

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